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# HOURS WITH THE BIBLE.

## CHAPTER I.

### JUDAH IN HEZEKIAH'S DAY.

HEZEKIAH was the last king of Judah who closed his reign amidst undisturbed prosperity. Having ascended the throne while Hosea was still king in Samaria, he had seen the Northern Kingdom crushed by Assyria, and its population led off by the conqueror to the banks of the Tigris and other regions of the East. Shalmaneser IV., Sargon, and Sennacherib, had in succession reigned over the great Ninevite empire, and Jerusalem had twice been threatened by its armies; once in the reign of Sargon—Sennacherib, perhaps, acting as commander-in-chief—and the second time by that prince himself, after he succeeded to the throne. The sudden destruction of his vast host, without human intervention, had filled the world with awe, and must have invested Hezekiah with a kind of sacredness as one specially protected by Heaven. An embassy from Merodach Baladan, of Babylon, the heroic opponent of the Great King, had attracted all eyes to Jerusalem and kindled the fury of Assyria; but Judah survived all these dangers, and for

three or four years before Hezekiah's death had been left undisturbed. The Philistines in the maritime plains had become independent under Ahaz, but submitted to his successor. Under the inspiration of prophets like Isaiah and Micah, Hezekiah had reversed the religious policy of his father, banishing idolatry, destroying the heathen high places, restoring the temple, reorganizing its worship, and observing the ancient national religious feasts with an enthusiasm unknown since the days of Jehoshaphat, two hundred years before. The revival of the old faith of Israel, which began under the preaching of Joel more than a hundred and fifty years before Hezekiah's day, had culminated under that of the son of Amoz. Formalism had spread with the growing influence of the priests and the stress laid on ceremonial worship,[1] but this had called forth the vigorous protests

[1] 2 Chron. xxix. 11. Num. iii. 6, 8, 14; xviii. 2, 6.
" " 21. Lev. iv. 3, 14.
" " 22. " viii. 14, 15, 19, 24.
" " 23. " iv. 15, 24.
" " 24. " " 14, 20.
" " 26. Num. x. 8, 10.
" " 31. Lev. vii. 12.
" " 35. " iii. 16.
Num. xv. 5, 7, 10.
" xxx. 2. " ix. 10, 11.
" " 3. Exod. xii. 6, 18.
" " 18. " xii. 43, etc.
" " 21. " xii. 15; xiii. 6.
" " 22. Deut. xxxiii. 10.
" " 27. Num. vi. 23.

I am aware that the revolutionary school of critics depreciate the testimony of Chronicles, as compiled at a later date than Kings, and lay stress on the fact that the Passover of Hezekiah is passed over in silence in the earlier book. But so broad-minded a critic as Bertheau reminds us that this is no ground for surprise, as Kings notices matters concerning the restoration of public

of the prophets, who, while owning the authority of the Mosaic system, insisted that the worth of its services depended on the spirit in which they were rendered, and demanded a life in accordance with the moral as well as external precepts of the Law. But, for the time, their words fell in great part unheeded. Deeply corrupted with the vices of neighbouring heathenism, the nation resented the puritan earnestness of the nobler members of the order, and, while ready to worship Jehovah at the command of the king, ignored Him in their daily life. The prophets were, in fact, in advance of their day. Their religious conceptions were too noble for their contemporaries. The world had not as yet seen a faith in which rites and ceremonies were not supreme, and could not realize the outward forms of worship as merely symbols of a lofty spiritual life. To the average Jew, as to the heathen, priestly acts and external compliances constituted the essence of religion. The reformation effected by Hezekiah was thus, to a great extent, superficial. The mass of the priests and of the people, and most of the prophets, were ready to go back to idolatry when it was introduced by Manasseh, as here, in England, the bulk of the nation and of the clergy returned at once

worship or its reforms only very slightly. But, he adds, since it admits of no doubt that Hezekiah uprooted idolatry (2 Kings xviii. 22), the great spring feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread must have been celebrated in a way more corresponding to the law of Moses than hitherto. It is, he continues, probable, that even during the reign of idolatry, festivals were held at the times appointed by the Law for the great Jewish feasts. He, also, calls attention to the fact that the invitation of Hezekiah to the Ten Tribes to attend the Passover was sent while King Hosea still reigned, and Samaria had not yet fallen. It was a last attempt to bring them back to their God. Bertheau, *Die B. der Chronik* (1873), p. 389.

to Romanism, when restored by Mary, after the death of Edward the Sixth.

It is difficult to realize the state of the petty kingdom of Hezekiah, in his last years of peace and prosperity. Its very insignificance is apt to be forgotten. The home of the one true religion which was to educate the world for God, it was yet no larger than the small triangle in the north of England defined by the towns of Stockton, Whitehaven, and Berwick-upon-Tweed; that is, it was rather smaller than Yorkshire. The re-conquest of the Philistine country had given it once more the partial command of the rich slopes of the Shephelah on the west. But, on the south, its narrow bounds soon reached the parched uplands of the Negeb, and Judah itself, since the destruction of its primitive forests, was only a region of bare grey hills, intersected by a labyrinth of narrow and mostly stony glens. Still, the climate was favourable, and what soil there was yielded abundantly. Careful terracing of the hill sides, and laborious cultivation of the valleys and straths, returned a rich harvest of grapes, olives, grain, and garden produce; the elements of a simple but abundant maintenance for town and country, if the ancient land laws had been still universally in force.

These laws, dating from the wilderness sojourn, were based on the soundest principles. Passing from the unsettled life of tents, the community were to be cultivators of the soil, and it was therefore divided inalienably among the whole population. Every peasant was made a landowner, but rather in trust for his descendants than as a freeholder. Jehovah Himself, remained absolute owner in chief,[1] the occupants being only His stewards,[2] holding possession under stringent conditions. The first fruits, the first born of all farm stock, and the tenth

[1] Lev. xxv. 23. [2] Luke xvi. 2, 3. 1 Cor. iv. 2. 1 Pet. iv. 10.

of all produce, must be paid, in the name of God, to the priests, the Levites, and the poor. Every seventh year the land must lie fallow, trusting to His bounty in the preceding harvests.[1] The soil was held, in fact, for the Crown, subject to certain payments and duties, but the Crown was that of heaven.

These conditions honourably satisfied, the title of the landowner was indefeasible. No tribe could seize land belonging to any other.[2] A king could not rob his meanest subject of his inheritance; for even Ahab obtained Naboth's vineyard only through the judicial murder of its owner, under a false charge of blasphemy and treason.[3] The absolute transfer of land was forbidden. At most, it could only be made over to a lessee till the year of jubilee, a period not exceeding forty-nine years. Moreover, even when thus for a time alienated, the nearest of blood—the goël or redeemer—had at all times the right to buy it back, that it might at once revert to the family of the original owner.[4]

Such were the land laws of Judah, or, rather, such had they been. But the noble ideal of a community in which all enjoyed practical equality, had long passed away. With the development of the monarchy and the gradual rise of courtiers and nobility and rich men, fatal abuses crept in. Usurers had taken advantage of periods of depression or temporary misfortune, to oppress their brethren. House had been added to house and field to field by these land robbers, till great estates had largely supplanted a peasant proprietary.[5] Many yeomen had even been driven from their holdings by violence; others

[1] Exod. xxiii. 10 ff. Lev. xxv. 3, 4; xxvi. 34; xxxv. 43. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21.
[2] Num. ix. 36. [3] 1 Kings xxi. 2 Sam. xvi. 4; xix. 29.
[4] Ruth iv. 3. Jer. xxxii. 7. [5] Isa. v. 8.

by legal frauds.[1] Wholesale evictions were common.[2] The poor were devoured from off the earth.[3] The rural population had to wander to the towns, or become labourers on ground that had been their own. Wealth accumulated and men decayed. A proletariat had been created by the tyranny of the moneyed class, aided by bad laws or usage. Discontent prevailed among large numbers who still clung to their holdings, and it found its utterance through the prophets. Men widely complained that in bad years they had to mortgage their lands, vineyards, and houses, to buy corn or to pay the taxes.[4] Splendour reigned in the mansions of the few, but deepening poverty in the cottages and cabins of the many. Under such circumstances national decline might be arrested for a time by a wise and good ruler, but could not permanently be warded off.

With the increase of population through successive centuries, and the consequent clearing of the woodlands, there must, as has been noticed, have been a gradual diminution of the rainfall, in the time of the later kings, increasing the difficulties of the husbandman and making his gains more precarious. Yet careful and assiduous industry, as we have seen, made much even of the barren chalk hills of Judah; huge underground cisterns filled during the winter and spring rains, sufficing usually, with the fertilizing Mediterranean night mists of the summer, to water the crops during the hot and dry months. In Egypt their forefathers had had to raise water from the sunken level of the Nile, to irrigate their fields and patches, but no creaking water wheels, turned by oxen or by the painful treading of the human foot, were needed in Pales-

[1] Micah ii. 2. [2] Micah ii. 9. Hab. ii. 9, 12. [3] Prov. xxx. 14.
[4] Neh. v. 2. The taxes in this case were for a foreign ruler but it must have been the same before the captivity.

tine.[1] What water there was, was led hither and thither over the soil, as in the irrigation of our own meadows.[2] No hedges divided the fields or gardens of neighbours; boundary stones, as on the continent now, showed each his limits.[3] The richer landowners employed slaves and hired labourers, under an overseer,[4] for field work, but were not themselves above taking part in the labours of their subordinates.[5] The long fallow of the seventh, or Sabbath year, gave the soil periodical rest; the burning of the stubble and chaff of each harvest, and perhaps systematic manuring, fertilized it.[6] Wheat and barley were the principal crops on the hill slopes and in the open bottoms; a fringe of vetches or other inferior produce often protecting the edges of the field. The eye rested on patches of lentils, beans, millet, cummin,

[1] Deut. xi. 10. A man sits before a wheel on which buckets are fixed, and turns it by drawing to him one set of spokes with his hands and pushing another away from him with his feet. *Niebuhr, Voy.*, vol. i. p. 120, pl. 15. *Robinson*, vol. ii. p. 22; vol. iii. p. 89. Reference is also perhaps made to the rivulets of water opened and closed with the foot, which are still common in Palestine. *Tent Work*, p. 328.

[2] Job. xxxviii. 25. Prov. xxi. 1.

[3] Deut. xix. 14; xxvii. 17. Prov. xxii. 18. Job. xxiv. 2. Hos. v. 10. It is curious to find in an inscription from Babylon, dating about 1400 years before Christ, heavy curses against any one who removed a landmark. He who injured the land or destroyed the boundary stone, or removed it, whoever he be, "may the gods—the lords of this land—make his name desolate, curse him with an unspeakable curse, desolate him with utter desolation, gather his posterity together for evil, not for good. Until the day of his departure from life may he come to ruin; may the gods rend him asunder, and may his name be trodden down." Comp. Ps. cix.

[4] Ruth ii. 5. [5] 1 Sam. xi. 5. 1 Kings xix. 19.

[6] Exod. xv. 7. Isa. v. 24. 2 Kings ix. 37. Jer. ix. 32; xvi. 4, etc.

cucumbers, melons, or flax.[1] The cotton plant seems also to have been cultivated on the warm coast plain, as it still is.[2] The terraced hills were rich with citron and olive trees, intermingled with the apricot, quince, plum, mulberry, and fig; while the date, the pomegranate, the lime, the almond, and the prickly pear, flourished in appropriate spots.

The sowing of the winter crops began towards the end of October, the early rains having then fallen, mostly during the nights, and at intervals. Rude ploughs, drawn by oxen, had already opened the soil; an iron-shod goad then, as now, urging on the slow-moving cattle.[3] Land was not indeed thought ready for grain till it had been ploughed more than once, the custom being, perhaps, like that of our own day, to plough it three or four times before sowing, during an interval of a whole year.[4] The clods having been broken up by a mattock,[5] the surface was finally levelled by a harrow.[6] November saw the husbandman sowing his beans, peas, lentils, and vetches; a fortnight later he sowed his barley, and in another month his wheat, sometimes broadcast, sometimes in rows;[7] care being taken that the seed should

[1] 2 Sam. xxiii. 11. Exod. iv. 9. 2 Sam. xvii. 28. Isa. xxviii. 25; i. 8. Josh. ii. 6. Hos. ii. 9. Prov. xxxi. 13.

[2] 1 Chron. iv. 21. "Fine linen" should be "cotton." Pausanias (A.D. 160–180) speaks of "Hebrew cotton," v. 5, 2.

[3] 1 Sam. xi. 7. Amos vi. 12. Acts ix. 5.

[4] Wetstein in Delitzsch's *Iesaia*, pp. 389 ff. Perhaps this is what Isaiah refers to when he speaks of the Jews as sowing and reaping for the first time, in the third year after the withdrawal of the Assyrians (Isa. xxxvii. 30).

[5] Isa. xxviii. 24. [6] Isa. xxviii. 24.

[7] Isa. xxviii. 25. The words "principal wheat" should, apparently, be "wheat in rows." See Art. *Sorah*, in *Mühlau und Volck*. Sabo says that sowing in rows was common among the Babylonians, as securing larger crops.

never be mixed, as in this case it fell to the share of the temple.[1] The seed needed, moreover, to be Levitically clean; that is, gathered from Jewish soil, by those who themselves were ceremonially free from defilement.[2] The summer crops were sown at the end of January and in February, in anticipation of the "latter rains" in March and April, on which their yield depended.

A brief respite from field work followed, but it was only brief, for the barley harvest in these warm regions began, round Jericho, in the first weeks of April; that of the coast plains, and then of the whole country, falling before the sickle by the end of the month. Watchers guarded the unfenced crop as it approached ripeness,[3] but the wayfarer was always free to pluck what ears he needed, if he were hungry.[4] The reapers, however, could not begin their task[5] till the first ripe sheaf, gathered from the valleys near Jerusalem, had been waved before God in thanksgiving, at the opening of the Passover rejoicings.[6] Wheat harvest began round Jericho in the second half of May, the higher lands, elsewhere, yellowing for the sickle a month later. The close of June saw the fields rough with long stubble over all the land, and forthwith the cattle were seen treading out the grain on the round open-air threshing floors on the hill tops, or in the long sweeps of the glens. Before Pentecost, or the Feast of Weeks, fifty days from the Passover, all the grain harvest was housed, and the people free to return thanks at the second great yearly feast, at which the

[1] Lev. xix. 19. Deut. xxii. 9.

[2] Michaelis, *Mos. Recht*, vol. iv. § 218, p. 329.

[3] Jer. iv. 17. [4] Matt. xii. 1.

[5] The men now sit on their haunches to reap, and cut off the straw very high up. *Tent Work in Palestine*, p. 329.

[6] *Helon's Pilgrimage*, vol. i. p. 287.

priest before the altar waved to all points of the compass loaves of the new corn, and a portion of the new flour, to express the gratitude of the nation to Jehovah for the new bread of another season.[1]

September and October saw the gathering and treading of the ripe grapes, and the plucking of the ruddy pomegranates; after which came the stripping of the olive trees, and the pressing of their berries for the golden oil. Then, at last, followed the third great festival of Tabernacles, the national harvest home, amidst seven days rejoicings. The old year had closed with September; October began the months of another.

In such a reign as that of Ahaz, the sacred feasts had doubtless been much neglected; but under a ruler like Hezekiah the religious feelings of the better part of the nation found joyful expression. The sixty-fifth Psalm, which bears the name of David, seems to have been used as a harvest hymn in these later times, alike in the temple courts and at the household altar of many a father in Israel.

Praise is due to Thee, O God, in Zion,[2]
To Thee shall the vow be performed!
O Thou that hearest prayer, to Thee all flesh come.
Our iniquities are too great for me to think of;
But Thou wilt hide our transgressions from Thine eyes.
Happy is the man whom Thou choosest,
And causest to approach unto Thee,
That he may dwell in Thy courts.
He shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house,
Even of Thy holy temple.

O satisfy us with the delights of Thy house, Thy holy temple!
By terrible deeds, in Thy righteousness, Thou hearest us,
O God of our salvation:

---

[1] *Helon's Pilgrimage*, vol. ii. p. 192. [2] Psalm lxv.

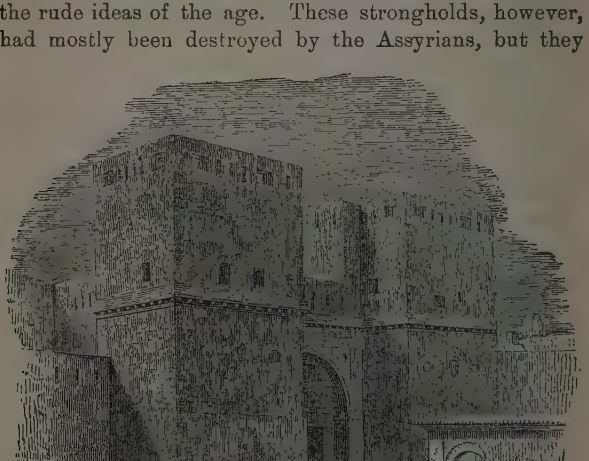
Who art the hope of all the ends of the earth,
And of those afar off, beyond the sea.
Who by Thy might settest fast the mountains,
Girding Thyself with power!
Who stillest the noise of the seas—the noise of their waves,
And the tumult of the nations;
So that the dwellers in the farthest parts
Fear the signs of Thy presence.

East and west; when morning rises, and when the night comes forth,
Thou makest to rejoice;
Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it abundantly;
Thou enrichest it greatly from the floods above—the river of God—
Which is full of water.
Thou providest men corn, when Thou hast thus prepared the earth for it;
Thou soakest the furrows; Thou washest down the clods,
Softening them by Thy showers, and blessing the springing grain.
Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness;
The paths of Thy wheels in the clouds drop fatness,
Yea, the pastures of the wilderness trickle with it;
The joyful hills put on robes of beauty;
The meadows are set off with flocks;
The valleys with waving corn:
Men shout, and sing for joy!

The yield of the soil in good years not only supplied the wants of the people, but left a surplus of grain for exportation.[1] In Solomon's day over eighty thousand bushels of wheat were paid yearly by the wise king to Hiram of Tyre,[2] and in Isaiah's time, and later, the Phenicians imported the grain they required, not only from Egypt, but from other districts of Palestine, especially the centre and north, and from east of the Jordan.[3]

[1] Gen. xxvi. 12. Matt. xiii. 8. [2] 1 Kings v. 11.
[3] Isa. xxiii. 3. Ezek. xxvii. 17. Acts xii. 20. Ezra iii. 7.

We have to picture the landscape of Judah in those years as dotted with numerous open villages and walled towns;[1] some of them regularly fortified according to the rude ideas of the age. These strongholds, however, had mostly been destroyed by the Assyrians, but they



MODERN ORIENTAL GATE—BAB EL NASR; CAIRO. (*From Lane's Arabian Nights.*)

were gradually being rebuilt; though the country must still have exhibited many traces of Sennacherib's invasion. The huge gates of these fortresses, set off by

[1] Deut. iii. 5. Esth. ix. 19.

a text of the law cut in the wall over them,[1] stood open by day; but the massive leaves were closed at twilight, and secured by heavy iron or brazen bars.[2] To strengthen these entrances to the town, they were generally surmounted by towers,[3] which supplied accommodation for the guard, and a look out, from which warders, at least in dangerous times, could announce, by voice or horn-blowing, the approach of danger.[4] In many cases the archway of the gate was protected by defences on the inner side also,[5] the room between serving as a place of muster for the[6] guard. An open space stretched away before the gates; forming a busy market place in the early morning, the lounge of the citizens in the cool of the day, the show ground for royal pageants, the forum of public business, and the gathering place in public movements. Most of the streets within the walls were too narrow for loaded camels to pass each other,[7] though in a few, carts and chariots could move freely.[8] Only those spots, however, where streets crossed each other offered vacant spaces for an audience to a prophet[9] or other public teacher, or for vanity or religious pretence to parade themselves.[10] Sanitary precautions were unknown. The streets were often deep with mire,[11] or cumbered with

[1] This is still seen in the East. [2] Josh. ii. 5, 7.
[3] 2 Sam. xviii. 33.
[4] 2 Sam. xviii. 24. 2 Kings ix. 17. Jer. vi. 17. Ezek. xxxiii. 1.
[5] 2 Sam. xviii. 24.
[6] 2 Kings vii. 10. Neh. xiii. 19. Jer. xxxvii. 13.
[7] Jos., *Bell.* In Cairo many streets are not above a yard wide.
[8] 2 Sam. xv. 1. 1 Kings i. 5. Jer. xvii. 25.
[9] Prov. i. 21. Luke xiii. 26. [10] Matt. vi. 2, 5.
[11] Ps. xviii. 42, etc. the word is Tit. It is applied to the deep mud in the bottom of subterranean cisterns (Jer. xxxviii. 6), or on the banks of the Nile after its overflow (Job xli. 30; Ps. cxliv. 13). The word suchah = sweepings, "filth," "dung," is used in

still worse impurities. All the refuse of the town, indeed, was thrown into them, to be eaten by hungry bands of town dogs which roamed through the streets by night, as in Eastern cities now. Arrangements for the comfort of foot passengers seem to have been unknown, for, notwithstanding the statement of Josephus that Solomon laid the great lines of commerce with black basalt, it is doubtful whether there were any paved roads or streets before the time of Christ. Herod Agrippa II. appears, indeed, to have paved the narrow lanes of Jerusalem for the first time,[1] and the earliest system of city drainage appears to have been introduced at Cæsarea, by Herod the Great.[2] The various crafts had their booths or shops, which were in their respective quarters or bazaars,[3] called by their names. Thus, the bakers,[4] the goldsmiths, the merchants,[5] the wool dealers, the braziers, the cloth sellers,[6] etc., had their various streets, each of which, like the others in the

A Detached Eastern House, without Projecting Windows.

Isa. v. 25. Chomer is used in Isa. x. 6, and is generally translated "clay"; sometimes "mortar."

[1] Jos., *Ant.*, XX. ix. 7. [2] Jos., *Ant.*, XV. ix. 6; XVI. v. 3.
[3] Bazaar, *Persian* = a market. [4] Jer. xxxvii. 21.
[5] Neh. iii. 31. [6] Jos., *Bell.*, V. viii. 9.

city, had its own gate which was shut when necessary.[1] The business part of the towns, moreover, was a distinct district, apart from the houses.[2] These were generally of more than one storey,[3] with flat continuous roofs, protected at the edges by a parapet,[4] lattices closing the windows facing the street, over which they often projected, so as almost to meet from the opposite sides, as in Cairo now.[5] When large enough, each dwelling had an inner court; the centre of family life. Words from the Law looked down from over the outer door or gateway, and portions of it, at least in later times, were inserted into the right post of the inner doors, or nailed against them.[6] There was no such thing as

A Mezuzah or Cylinder containing a portion of the Law, fixed on a Door Post.

[1] Eccles. xii. 4.

[2] Zeph. i. 11. Maktesh = the mortar, was a locality in Jerusalem.

[3] 2 Kings i. 3, 4, 10.

[4] 2 Sam. xi. 2. Deut. xxii. 8.

[5] Judges v. 28. *Lindsay*, p. 27.

[6] The Rabbis, in later ages, invented what is called the Mezuzah, = "door post," in fancied compliance with the command in Deut. vi. 9, to write certain words on door posts and gates. It is a piece of parchment, prepared by Rabbinical rules, and inscribed with the verses Deut. vi. 4–9, and xi. 13–21. The slip is enclosed in a cylinder of wood, tin, or lead, a hole cut in which shows the word Shaddai, written on the outside of the parchment. One of these Scripture charms is nailed obliquely to the door posts of all the rooms of a house, on the righthand side, that every one who enters may remember that the eye of God is ever upon him; a thought blessed in the extreme. Unfortunately, in too many cases, it has sunk to a mere superstition; the Mezuzah being regarded as in itself a charm, to guard the

lighting the streets, and honest citizens were careful to be early at home; or, if necessarily abroad after dark, carried lamps with them.[1] Without this precaution one was exposed to be attacked by the troops of half wild street dogs, or arrested by the watchmen.[2] Hence the town seemed deserted by night, except when a marriage procession, with lamps and torches, broke the "outer darkness,"[3] which, compared with the brightness inside the houses, became a proverbial comparison for misfortune in contrast to happiness.[4] In the time of Nehemiah, if not earlier, the town gates were closed at sunset on Friday evenings, and not re-opened till the Sabbath ended, at twilight, on Saturday.[5]

Where peace was so uncertain, the size and prosperity of towns depended on their strength and position, and few of them were without walls. The villages, like those

house from evil. A person going out or entering touches it with his finger, and kisses the finger that has touched it; believing, not seldom, that while it remains undefiled, it protects the house from the angel of death, from evil dreams, and from evil spirits. The three names of an angel—mere fancies of the Rabbis—are sometimes put below the word Shaddai on the back of the roll, prayer being offered to him for help and protection. "Whoever," says the Talmud, "has the phylacteries bound to his head and arm, the fringes affixed to his Tallith, and the Mezuzah nailed on his door post, is safe from sin." "In thy name, Kusu Bemochsas Kusu," prays the outgoer, "may I go forth and prosper;" or, rising above supplication to an angel: "The Lord guard my going out and coming in, for ever." On the Mezuzah, see Buxtorff, *Synagoga Judaica*. pp. 381–387. Herzog, *Ency.*, vol. iv. p. 682. Barclay's *Talmud*, p. 362 ff. Sacred texts were written over the doors of ancient Egyptian houses. *Wilkinson*, vol. ii. p. 202.

[1] Matt. xxv. 1. [2] Ps. xxii. 17, 21. Cant. v. 7. Isa. xxi. 11, 12.
[3] Matt. xxv. 6. [4] Matt. viii. 12.
[5] Neh. xiii. 19. Isa. lx. 11. Rev. xxi. 25.

of Europe in the middle ages, were generally near some strong place, and were hence spoken of as its daughters.[1] Most towns were on the tops of heights, or in the recesses of narrow valleys, like Shechem and Hebron, and it was to its strong position that Jerusalem owed its comparative greatness. Yet even it was, at best, a small place, according to modern standards; its population not exceeding, perhaps, 50,000; if we may judge from the fact that its fighting men, carried off by Nebuchadnezzar, with Jehoiachin,[2] numbered 10,000. Other towns were smaller. Thus, at the time of the conquest, Ai had 12,000 inhabitants,[3] and though Gibeon was larger than this,[4] the population of Gibeah, as late as the days of the Judges, was apparently only about 3000.[5]

The busiest time of the day in these ancient communities was the early morning, when the country people thronged the open space before the gates to sell their produce,[6] and the magistrates and judges, or even the king, sat in the shadow of the gateway, deciding public or private disputes.[7] During the day every one who could sought shelter from the heat, but in the cool of the evening, the sea-wind blew, from about eight or nine to ten o'clock,[8] bringing a delightful coolness, of which the citizens were glad to take advantage, by leaving their houses and narrow streets for a pleasant saunter or gossip outside the gates.[9] In the deep shadow of the

[1] Num. xxi. 25–32. Josh. xv. 45; etc.

[2] 2 Kings xxiv. 14. *Riehm*, p. 693. Thenius fancies it had a population of only about 17,000.

[3] Josh. viii. 25. [4] Josh. x. 2.

[5] Judges xx. 15; there were 700 fighting men.

[6] Neh. xiii. 15, 20.

[7] Prov. xxii. 22; xxiv. 7. Deut. xvi. 18. Zech. viii. 16. Ruth iv. 1 ff. [8] Furrer, Art. *Winde*, in *Schenkel*.

[9] Gen. xix. 1; xxxiv. 20. Ps. lxix. 13. Prov. i. 20, 21; xxxi. 23, 31.

houses the children could play at all hours, but the old men or women who watched them were fain to sit in the cool of their doorways, staff in hand, till the sun went down.[1]

The towns, like the villages, were governed by a body of elders, the humbler counterpart of the chiefs of tribes and clans, who still ruled each generation, as their predecessors had done from before the days of the Exodus. Jehoshaphat[2] had associated trained judges with them in the legal business of their locality; those for ecclesiastical matters being Levites;[3] but they were still the chief recognized magistrates of each locality. In Jerusalem a High Court had been set up by the same king, with secular and priestly judges.[4] For though, in earlier times, elders of different ranks had been the sole judges,[5] this ancient simplicity soon passed away. But from the very first, under whatever name, the functions of local government had been carried on by local magistrates,[6] and there were even town halls for their convenience. The bazaar also in each town was under the charge of a special inspector.[7]

A wise precaution, unknown till very recently in our

[1] Zech. viii. 4, 5. Jer. vi. 11. Matt. xi. 16.

[2] 2 Chron. xix. 5. [3] Deut. xxi. 5. 1 Chron. xxiii. 4; xxvi. 29.

[4] Deut. xvii. 9; xix. 17.

[5] Josh. xx. 4. In Numbers xxxv. 12, 24 ff., the word "congregation" is used where in the parallel text in Josh. the elders are named. These may very naturally have been spoken of as the congregation, from their being its representatives. It is to be remembered, moreover, that as trials took place in the open air, a crowd of bystanders always gathered round, associating themselves in the proceedings, as they still do in the East, as if they also were judges.

[6] Jos., *Vita.*, 12, 13, 27, 34, 61, 68; *Bell.*, II. xxi. 3; V. iv. 2.

[7] Jos., *Ant.*, XVIII. vi. 2.

own country, strictly forbade the burial of the dead within the limits of any community. The cemeteries, shaded by numerous trees, lay outside the walls; the multitude resting in ordinary graves; the rich under costly monuments or in chambers hewn out of the rock—where the departed were "gathered to their fathers";[1] great stone doors or massive stone coverings—the "Gates of Death"[2]—shutting in their dark abodes. Orchards and gardens, where the soil permitted, stretched round the towns and cities.[3] In nearly every landscape clumps of olives, or single olive trees, with their grey foliage, met the eye, and yielded the rich oil which was a native product of the land.[4] It was used for the preparation of all kinds of food, and even for the household lamps, and it was also in great demand for anointing the person. The supply, however, exceeded the home consumption so greatly that a large quantity was exported to Egypt and Phenicia.[5] The king himself had "oil gardens" on the fertile slopes of the Shephelah,[6] and "The Mount of Olives," Gethsemane,[7] and Bezetha,[8] show its abundance in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. The stony slopes of the hills reverberating the heat, and the moist winds of night, favoured the growth of the vine. Great vineyards are now found only round Hebron, though vines still run up the houses and shade the roofs, all over Palestine, or twist through the branches of the fig tree, making a cool arbour in the cottage gardens.[9]

In Hezekiah's day the grapes of Engedi, of Hebron, of

[1] Judges ii. 10. 2 Kings xxii. 20. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 28.
[2] Ps. ix. 13. [3] Deut. xx. 19. Jos., *Bell.*, V. ii. 2.
[4] Deut. viii. 8, etc.
[5] Hos. xii. 2. Ezek. xxvii. 17. 1 Kings v. 11. Ezra iii. 7.
[6] 1 Chron. xxviii. 28. [7] = Oil press.
[8] Place of Olives. *Riehm*, p. 699. [9] Micah iv. 4.

Shechem, of Carmel, and of Jezreel, were famous.[1] The wine of Lebanon bore a great name, and the luxuriant vines of northern Moab were hardly less renowned.[2] On the shores of Gennesaret grapes might be plucked for ten months in the year.[3] Bethhaccerem—"The House of the Vine"—was not far from Bethlehem. The market of Jerusalem had ripe clusters from Jericho and the coast as early as the end of July, though the harvest was not ripe over the country till the middle of September or the beginning of October.

The literary glory of the reigns of David, Solomon, and Jehoshaphat, marking as it did the prosperity of their times, naturally showed itself once more under Hezekiah. Not only were the famous productions of the genius of the past—its Proverbs and Psalms—rescued from oblivion and collected into a permanent form; the contemporary prophecies of Isaiah and Micah were engrossed and preserved, and the sacred poetry of the nation received noble additions from now unknown writers. The triumph over Sennacherib had roused the soul of the nation and was sung by many bards. Some of their lyrics have been given in the last chapter of the preceding volume, but such an event was a fruitful theme of poetry.[4] The forty-eighth Psalm celebrates the humiliation of the Great King no less vividly than those already given:—

> Great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised
> In the City of our God; His holy mountain!

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[1] Cant. i. 14. Num. xiii. 24. Judges ix. 27. 2 Chron. xxvi. 10. 1 Kings xxi. 1.

[2] Cant. viii. 11. Hos. xiv. 8. Isa. xvi. 8. Jer. xlviii. 32.

[3] Jos., *Bell.*, III. x. 8.

[4] Ps. xlviii.

Beautiful, in its swelling height, is Mount Zion;
The joy of the whole earth.

Far as the utmost north, in the city of the Great King,[1]
Elohim has made Himself known in her palaces
As a sure defence of His people.[2]

For, lo, the kings gathered against Zion;
They pressed on together;
They saw—they marvelled—
They were troubled—they fled;
Trembling seized them;
Pain, as of a travailing woman!
As the great Tarshish ships are scattered by an eastern storm,
(So were they shattered and destroyed!)

As we have heard (in hymn and song)
In the city of Jehovah of Hosts—the city of our God—
So have we (ourselves) seen.
"God will preserve her for ever."[3]

We have thought on Thy loving kindness, O God,
In the midst of Thy temple!
As Thy name, O God, is known to the ends of the earth,
So, now, in Thy praise (as a God who defends His people)
Thy right hand is full of righteousness!

Let Mount Zion rejoice; let the daughters of Judah be glad,
Because of Thy judgments!
Walk round Zion—make a circuit of her walls—
Count her towers—notice her ramparts—
Number her castle-like palaces—
That ye may tell to the generation to come
That the God (who has protected them) is our God,
And will be our champion for ever."[4]

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[1] Nineveh. [2] Bredenkamp, *Gesetz und Propheten*, pp. 144–5.

[3] It is to be noticed that Zion is here, already, in Hezekiah's time, the "Holy Mountain" of Jehovah; that is, the religious centre of the nation. It did not, therefore, become so, first, after the Exile, as the supporters of Welhausen's theory maintain.

[4] *Ewald. De Wette. von Lengerke. Kay. Hitzig. Moll. Hupfeld. Delitzsch.*

The sixty-sixth Psalm[1] has been regarded as another relic of these great days, when the remembrance of a deliverance hardly less wonderful than that of the Red Sea, filled all hearts and kindled the imagination.

Make a loud noise unto Elohim, all lands;[2]
Strike the harp in honour of His name;
Give Him the glory which is his due praise!
Say unto Elohim: "How terrible are Thy works,
Through the greatness of Thy power must Thine enemies submit to Thee.
All lands will do homage to Thee and praise Thee on the harp!
They will strike the harp to Thy name."

Come and see the great deeds of Elohim,
Whose might is so irresistible by the sons of men.

He turned the sea into dry land,
They went through the flood on foot—
There did we glory in being His!
His—who by His might rules for ever—
His eyes keep watch over the nations—
The rebellious—let them not raise their heads!

O bless our God, ye peoples,
Raise loud the voice of His praise,
Who lifted our souls from death to life,
And did not suffer our feet to give way!

For Thou, Elohim, hast proved us;
Tried us in the furnace, as silver is tried;
Thou broughtest us under the net,
Thou laidst a heavy load on our loins;
Thou lettedst the worthless ride over our head:
We passed through the fire and the flood;
But Thou hast vouchsafed us a great deliverance!

I will go into Thy house with whole burnt-offerings;
I will pay Thee my vows;

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[1] Ewald thinks it is made up of two Psalms, the first ending at the 13th verse.

[2] Ps. lxvi.

Vows uttered with open lips;
Vows proclaimed by my mouth when I was in trouble.
Whole burnt-offerings of fatted sheep will I bring Thee,
With the smoke of the sacrifice of rams;[1]
I will offer to Thee oxen and young goats.

Come, hear me tell, all ye that fear God,
What He has done for my soul!
I cried aloud to Him with my mouth;
His high praise was on my tongue.
For if, in my heart, I had looked aside to iniquity,
The Lord of all would not have heard me.

But, verily, Elohim has heard;
He has attended to the voice of my prayer.
Blessed be Elohim,
Who has not turned away my prayer,
Nor His mercy from me.[2]

That the only remaining literature of a people should be so wholly and sublimely religious as odes like this, is a peculiarity which marks that of the Hebrews alone. The existence of one Living God; our dependence on Him; His holiness, and the necessity of spiritual religion, to please Him; sacrifices and offerings having no worth without it; are assumed as truths respecting which there is no question. To obtain His favour, to trace His hand in all human affairs, national and individual, to praise His goodness or to implore His forgiveness, is the single thought of the writer. The one subject of the only collection of Hebrew books we possess is—God. How different with the literature of every other people!

[1] Rams were the burnt-offerings of the high priests, the princes, and the people. The use of the plural shows that the psalmist speaks for the whole worshippers, not for himself alone.

[2] This Psalm appears, from its language, to be the composition of Hezekiah.

It is necessary to remember this striking characteristic, if we would rightly estimate the religious enthusiasm under Hezekiah, or the mortal struggle against heathenism under his son, Manasseh. The national party, zealous for the worship of Jehovah, the God of their fathers, looked back to a golden age under David, but, since his day, had seen the rise and occasional triumph of foreign heathenism, countenanced by a number of their kings, and by the court and upper classes. Under Athaliah they had maintained a fierce struggle against the introduction of Phenician idolatry; under Ahaz against the heathenism of the Euphrates. Headed by prophets, they had crushed the former, in the reign of Jehoash, and the latter in that of Hezekiah, disdaining to substitute for their national faith that of any other kingdom, however great or powerful. The glory of Tyre or of Nineveh might be an argument to the foreign party in their midst, for the greatness of the gods by whom it was claimed to have been secured; *they* clung to Him who had opened for their fathers a way through the sea; who had made David victorious from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, and who now, in these last years, had smitten, by an awful miracle, the armies of the Great King, and made them flee apace from under the walls of His chosen Zion.

But as in all communities, in every age, it was only a minority who cherished, with a full and intelligent conviction, the great principles which thus for a time were triumphant. The mass of the people, now, as always, passively yielded themselves to the spirit of the day; ready to follow Hezekiah's reforms, in the excitement of the hour, but no less so to pass over to the heathen party, should it again get the ascendancy. Two forces contended for supremacy; the national party, or Jehovah worshippers—under the prophets; and the patrician party,

who sighed for the glitter of foreign manners and the fancied security of foreign alliances, and, to secure both, were eager to adopt the heathenism of the neighbouring monarchies.

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# CHAPTER II.

## MANASSEH.

KING OF JUDAH.

MANASSEH, B.C. 695–642.[1]

CHIEF KINGS OF EGYPT.

TIRHAKA or TAHARKU. } The dates of these reigns are uncertain.
PIANCHI MERAMUN, son of Tirhaka. }

PSAMMETICHUS I. B.C. 664–612 (united the native and Ethiopian dynasties by his marriage).

KINGS OF ASSYRIA.

SENNACHERIB, B.C. 705–681.
ESARHADDON „ 681–668.
ASSURBANIPAL (Sardanapalus) B.C. 668–625.

KINGS OF PHENICIA.

ELULÄUS.
ITHOBAL II. (tributary to Sennacherib).
ABDIMULKUTH, *King of Sidon*, deposed by Esarhaddon.
BAAL, *King of Tyre*. } In the time of Sardanapalus.
ISKIAKAP, *King of Byblus*. }
KULUBAAL, *King of Arvad*. }

BABYLON, an Assyrian province. Edom, Phenicia, and all Palestine, except Judea, for a time, subject to Assyria. Egypt prostrate before Assyria, which ruled all Western Asia besides.

AT the opening of Hezekiah's reign of twenty-nine years, Judah had been weak, distracted and sinking. An unwise alliance with Assyria, the most dangerous of enemies, against Syria and the Northern Kingdom, had involved the court of Jerusalem in the political entanglements of Western Asia. Faith in Jehovah had decayed; Assyrian idolatry, favoured by Ahaz to flatter the Great King and secure the favour of gods so powerful as his,

[1] B.C. 698–643 *Riehm;* 695–640 *Rösch* in *Herzog*, vol. xviii. p. 463; 696–641 *Winer;* 695–641 *Grätz*, vol. ii. p. 274.

had been introduced with great splendour in Jerusalem —and the immorality of heathenism, as a necessary result, had poisoned the springs of public, social and private life. When the good king lay dead, a generation later, amidst the wail of his people, everything was changed for the better. Encouraged and guided by Isaiah and other prophets, he had maintained the throne amidst the most threatening convulsions. He had restored the theocratic principle and acted loyally by it; had banished idolatry, at least in its public manifestations; restored the services of the temple in their glory; reorganized its priesthood, provided for their support, and re-established the Passover feast as the great religious festival of the nation. In his early reign he had seen the fall of Samaria, and the successive deportations of the Ten Tribes to Assyria; but his own kingdom, though far weaker, had weathered the storm of those years. The Philistines had been driven back in the Maritime Plain and their territory re-annexed to Judah; the tribute paid to Assyria by Ahaz had been discontinued without evil consequences; the terrors of the Assyrian invasion under Sargon had been surmounted; the vast army of Sennacherib had melted like snow before the glance of Jehovah, and the ambassadors of his bitter enemy, Merodach Baladan, of Babylon, had been received at Jerusalem. Fidelity to Jehovah—meaning as it did, uprightness, valour, and lofty convictions,—had received its reward in national honour and prosperity.

Unhappily, Hezekiah had no grown-up son to follow him. His deepest regret in his almost fatal illness, fifteen years before his death, had been the want of an heir to whom to transmit his crown. A son had however been born to him three years later, but he was now only a boy of twelve; left at the most impressible age, with-

out a father's counsels, to the baleful influence of the aristocratic heathen party, whom Hezekiah had with difficulty repressed during his reign. Of these, some, who had lived in the reign of Ahaz, cherished its worst traditions, and as a class they eagerly longed to revive them. Heathenism was fashionable, in fact, in high Jerusalem society, and had only been checked and kept under while Hezekiah lived. Like the Romanists in England, under Edward VI., its adherents yielded, even at best, only a sullen acquiescence to a religious reformation they detested, and thwarted it when they could.[1] Everything indicated that a terrible reaction, like that of the Restoration after the puritan strictness of the Commonwealth, would mark the opening of a new reign.

The name Manasseh, borne by Hezekiah's son only, may have been given in the hope that the Northern Kingdom, now left desolate, might be reunited to Judah under him. But this hope was vain. Local Assyrian governors seem to have taken the place of the kings of Israel,[2] but the antipathy of Ephraim to Judah, and the heathenism of what population was left, proved stronger than the attraction of Jerusalem, or the hatred of vassalage to a foreign master.

The queen mother, if we may trust Jewish tradition, was a daughter of the great prophet Isaiah, but according to the more trustworthy statement of Josephus had a less illustrious citizen or noble of Jerusalem as father.[3] Her name, whether given at her marriage or earlier, wakes

[1] Isa. i. 29; ii. 20; lxv. 3. 2 Chron. xxiv. 17, 18. Jer. viii. 1, 2.

[2] The most recent Assyrian investigations make it doubtful whether a vassal kingdom had been set up at Samaria, under kings, as stated in vol. iv. p. 308. Schrader, *Abh. Berl. Ak.*, 1879. Delitzsch, *Wo lag das Paradies*, p. 286. Nöldeke, *Z. D. M. G.*, 1882, p. 178.

[3] *Ant.*, X. iii. 1.

a thought of old-world tenderness and poetry, for to Hezekiah, at least, she was Hephzibah—"my delight is in her." Was it to the glory of her marriage ceremony that Isaiah refers when he speaks of "the bridegroom putting on his priestly crown,[1] and the bride adorning herself with her jewels,"[2] and was it a fond reminiscence of one he had loved and respected, when he tells us in one of his last chapters, that Jehovah will make Zion, after her long desolation, once more His Hephzibah?[3]

Manasseh was the thirteenth king in descent from David, and, boy as he was at his father's death, seems to have reigned, at least nominally, without a regency, from the first. His mother may have been the real sovereign for a time, as often happens in similar cases in the East, but he soon fell under the influence of the heathen court circle and palace officials;[4] for the upper class in Judah had always favoured foreign alliances and the toleration of foreign worship.[5] Under their tutelage the reign of Hezekiah was treated as an odious interruption of the national life, to be utterly ignored. Manasseh's rule was to be a continuation of that of Ahaz, both in religion and public polity. The result might

[1] So, literally, the phrase in A. V. "decketh himself with ornaments." Some such custom seems alluded to as still prevails in northern Europe where the bride wears a crown on her marriage day. The bridegroom in Israel was "crowned on the day of his espousals." Cant. iii. 11. The Hebrew phrase is literally "to make priestly the turban, or head-dress."

[2] Isa. lxi. 10.

[3] Isa. lxii. 4. An undesigned coincidence like this is very striking, for the word Hephzibah occurs only in this passage, except where used in 2 Kings xxi. 1 of Manasseh's mother. Does this not seem to speak for the later chapters, as well as the earlier, being by Isaiah?

[4] Zeph. i. 5–9; iii. 3, 4.

[5] 2 Chron. xxiv. 17.

have been foreseen. Extending through fifty-four years, and thus the longest in the history of Judah, it formed so dark a blot on the national annals that it is almost passed over in silence by the chroniclers of the time. Men regarded it as a period which it was desirable to bury as far as possible in oblivion.

The destruction of the high places by Hezekiah; the overthrow of the idolatry so widely spread in the former reign; and, not least, the long continuance of court favour to the friends of Jehovah-worship, had infuriated the heathen party to the uttermost. Their national religion seemed a barbarous eccentricity, degrading them in the eyes of the great world, and isolating them from the nations around. Idolatry had the prestige of splendid success, for had not the gods of Assyria raised the Great King to the most dazzling glory. In that splendour they too, like others, would like to bask, by introducing Assyrian manners and worship. Nineveh was to Western Asia what the Paris of Louis Fourteenth was to Europe. Not to imitate it was to be provincial and vulgar. The prophets had denounced this apostasy in the past, and brought about harsh restrictions on its supporters; they and their followers would now have to suffer in turn. A reaction set in, like that of Queen Mary's reign after the death of Edward VI. Ahaz had conceded a contemptuous toleration to Jehovah-worship; now, it would be suppressed. The prophets were dangerous to the aristocracy, from their hold on the people.

The priests had been accused, even by Isaiah, of being in many cases drunken and profligate.[1] What value was there in new moons, and Sabbaths, and periodical feasts, kept by such men; or what better were sacrifices offered by them, than similar rites performed by the

[1] Isa. xxviii. 7; lvi. 12.

priests of other gods? He had spoken of them contemptuously, as "greedy dogs which could never have enough," and as looking only for their own gains.[1] Micah had said that they taught for hire, and that the prophets divined for money.[2] The old times of Ahaz were better!

Even under the despotism of an Eastern king, however, no course of public action can be vigorously carried out unless largely supported by public opinion. Unhappily, the earnest supporters of the old national faith were only a small minority. The reforms of the past had been mainly external. The community at large could still be spoken of as a "seed of evil doers, laden with iniquity," and Jerusalem could be compared to Sodom and Gomorrah.[3] All through Hezekiah's reign, in spite of outward conformity to Jehovah-worship, many had continued their heathen practices. Idols of gold and silver glittered under trees in gardens sacred to Baal and Ashteroth; sacrifices were offered secretly on the house roofs to the star-gods of Assyria; incense rose to them from illegal altars of brick; men haunted graves and tombs by night, for dark consultation with the dead, through necromancers;[4] swine and other unclean beasts were offered in sacrifice, as in Egypt, and feasts held on their flesh. Worse than all, those who thus followed heathenism affected moral superiority to the worshippers of Jehovah.[5] It needed only a hint from those in authority to raise the multitude against the partizans of the old national faith.

The flattering embassy of Merodach Baladan to Hezekiah, years before, may have tended to encourage this revival of Asiatic heathenism. Babylon had, indeed, for

[1] Isa. lvi. 11. [2] Mic. iii. 11. [3] Isa. i. 4, 10.
[4] From *necros*, dead, and *manteia*, a prophesying. *Gr.*
[5] Isa. i. 29; ii. 20; lxv. 3, 4.

the time been crushed by Sennacherib, but the visit of its representatives had shown that Judah was thought, by outside nations, an ally worth having. In those ages, however, alliance with any state implied, as a rule, more or less complete recognition of its gods.[1] Nor had the lofty conception revealed at Sinai,[2] of a Spiritual Being who could have no similitude, been as yet brought home to the popular mind. Surrounded by nations worshipping idols, men were not able, as a rule, to rise above universally prevailing ideas, and heartily accept a religion without images or other symbols of the Divinity. Nor can we wonder at this, when we find such fancied helps to devotion still so largely used in the Church of Rome, and sacred pictures reverenced in the Greek communion. The emptiness of the Holy of Holies at Jerusalem, which, centuries later, excited the wonder of Pompey, was to become the boast and glory of the Jew, only after a long and deadly struggle, in Jerusalem itself, against the heathen bias of human nature.

How soon the reaction began is not told, but it was terrible when it came. The high places thrown down by Hezekiah were rebuilt on the hill tops and elsewhere, for the different forms of Baal idolatry, and lewd Asherahs were raised beside them. But this was not enough. Ahaz had introduced, for the first time in the history of Israel, the Assyrian worship of "all the host of heaven," —that is, of the five planets—and it was now restored. The sun and moon had hitherto been worshipped as Baal and Astarte—the representatives of the male and female principles in nature. Now, however, a purely sidereal worship was added. The stars received adoration as the

[1] This did not apply to David's relations to Tyre. But he was an exceptional man.

[2] Exod. xx. 3.

directing and controlling powers in human affairs, and, with the sun and moon, the rulers of the universe. Ages before, this worship, then common among the Arabs, had been forbidden,[1] though as yet comparatively pure, but the prohibition had hitherto been unneeded. The small altars which Ahaz had built for star-worship on the roof of his palace, were set up again, and others of a larger size, with an eastern aspect,[2] raised for Baal and Astarte, not only in the men's court in the temple, but also in that of the priests, which was specially set apart for the worship of Jehovah. Other altars, besides, defiled the sacred building, and, above all, a graven image of Astarte, and a huge Asherah, were set up under the shade of the trees in the outer courts. The lewd worship associated with these symbols was also established in the temple; the degraded women and mutilated men who took part in it being lodged in the chambers that lined the outer court. By night the holy enclosures resounded with the orgies of the most degraded of all forms of religion; by day the women wove hangings for the Asherah and tent covers for the obscene uses of its worship.[3] To make room for the image of Astarte and the heathen altars in the temple, the altar of Jehovah was cast out of the priests' court, and the Ark from the Holy of Holies,[4] though it was not actually destroyed.[5] Some of the store chambers in the temple enclosure, moreover, were appropriated as stables for sacred white

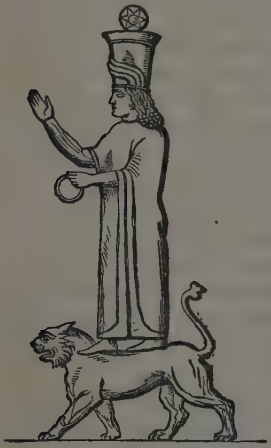
[1] Deut. iv. 19; xvii. 3. These verses have been wrongly held to show the late origin of Deuteronomy. But see Winer, *Sternkunde;* Herzog, *Zabier*, vol. xviii. p. 343; Chwolsohn, *Die Ssabier, etc.*, vol. ii., pp. 21, 173, 611.

[2] Ezek. viii. 16. 2 Kings xxi. 4; xxiii. 12. Jer. vii. 30.

[3] 2 Kings xxi. 3, 7; xxiii. 7. [4] 2 Chron. xxxiii. 16.

[5] Jer. iii. 16. 2 Chron. xxxv. 3. Rosenmüller, *A. und N. Morgenland*, vol. iii. p. 247. But see, afterwards, under Josiah.

horses dedicated to the sun, and for chariots drawn by them in the great processions at the festivals of the god.[1] All the superstitions connected with Tyrian or Assyrian worship flourished apace. Nor were these enough. The craving for "wisdom," which had continued since Solomon's day, had taken the morbid direction of a desire to learn the secrets of noted foreign religions. Envoys were therefore sent to distant lands, to bring back, if possible, new oracles, and open new avenues of intercourse with the unseen.[2] The simplicity of the old



THE GODDESS ISTAR OR ASTARTE OR ASHTORETH.[3]

[1] Most ancient nations thought of the sun as a flaming chariot drawn by the finest and swiftest horses. The ancient Persians spoke of it as drawn by four, and hence consecrated and sacrificed horses to it. Xenophon saw a procession in which were these animals, to be thus offered. *Cyrop.*, viii. 3–6. Even the barbarous Massagetæ had this custom. *Herod.*, i. 216. The Romans had a sun chariot drawn by four horses, of colours chosen to represent the four seasons. Indian mythology has the same idea. The Rabbis say that Manasseh's sun chariot was driven out each morning, the king himself in it, from the east door of the temple, to the top of Mount Olivet, to worship the sun at its rising. See Rosenmüller, *A. und N. Morgenland*, vol. iii. p. 249.

[2] *Ewald*, vol. iii. p. 717. Isa. lvii. 5–10. Jer. ii. 10–13, 23–28.

[3] The lion on which she stands symbolizes the wild power of nature controlled by her. Over her head is a circle (the moon ?) enclosing a star (Venus). Horns rise from the side of the head, perhaps to symbolize those of the moon, or, as Merx thinks, a relic of the goddess having been originally worshipped as a cow.

national faith had little to feed diseased curiosity. Star-worship brought with it a wide sweep of pretended science and insight into the future. Soothsayers and diviners flourished; wizards and necromancers, affecting to consult the dead, abounded.[1] The hideous image of Moloch, the god of the Ammonites, once more rose in the Valley of Hinnom, and Manasseh himself led the way in consecrating his own children, not to Jehovah, but to the grisly idol,[2] or, as the phrase ran, making him pass through the fire to the god; as if the flames, burning away the impure earthly body, let the freed soul pass through them, cleansed from all taint of earth,[3] to unite with the godhead.[4] Ahaz had done the same,[5] and the people had largely followed the royal example;[6] nor can we doubt that Manasseh would find many to imitate him also. Human sacrifice became common at the "high places of Tophet"[7] in the Valley of Hinnom; the stately central mound, on which the idol towered aloft, rising "deep and large"[8] in the midst. Night seems to have been the special time for these awful immolations. The yells of the children bound to the altars, or rolling into the fire from the brazen arms of the idol; the shouts and hymns of the frantic crowds; and the wild tumult of drums and shrill instruments, by which the cries of the victims were sought to be drowned, rose in awful discordance over the city;[9] forming, with the whole scene, visible from the walls

[1] 2 Kings xxi. 3–7. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 3–7.

[2] 2 Chron. xxxiii. 6. [3] Mövers, *Rel. d. Phön.*, vol. i. p. 329.

[4] A curious illustration of the vitality of all superstitions is given by Maimonides (A.D. 1135–1204), who himself saw Egyptian nurses passing infants over fire, to preserve them from misfortune.

[5] 2 Kings xvi. 3. [6] 2 Kings. xvii. 17.

[7] Jer. vii. 31, 32. Ezek. xxiii. 37, 39. 2 Kings xxiii. 10.

[8] Isa. xxx. 33. [9] See vol. iii. p. 366.

by the glow of the furnaces and flames, such an ideal of transcendent horror, that the name of the valley became, and still continues, in the form of Gehenna, the usual word for hell.[1]

It was an organized attempt to win over the people as a whole to idolatry, and it succeeded only too well. The sacred books were so systematically destroyed that men listened to the Law, fifty years later, as to a newly discovered treasure. The name of God was erased wherever it was found.[2] The Sabbath was disregarded.[3] To swear by Moloch became a common oath.[4] Fresh altars rose in the gardens round Jerusalem and on the flat roofs of the houses.[5] Black-robed priests of Baal took the place of the white-robed priests of Jehovah.[6] Star-worship became so popular that, a hundred years later, it was still followed. In Jeremiah's time, in the generation after Manasseh, the worship of the planet Venus, the queen of heaven, was general. The children gathered wood, the fathers kindled the fire on the altars, and the women kneaded sacred cakes, to offer in her honour.[7] Clouds of incense to a mob of idols were continually rising from public and private altars. Every religion was tolerated but that of Jehovah.

[1] Gehinnom was the place in which the refuse of the temple sacrifices and the offal of the city were burned, and the fire, never extinguished, added to the appropriateness of the name as a symbol of the pit. The Burning Ghaut on the Hooghly, near Calcutta, shows a somewhat similar spectacle in our own day. The bodies of the dead are often imperfectly burned, and with the constant smouldering fire, the black smoke, the foul stench, and the crowd of vultures perched around, help us to realize Gehinnom.

[2] *Patrick.* [3] Isa. lxvi. 2; lviii. 13. [4] Zeph. i. 5.

[5] Isa. lxv. 3, 11. Jer. viii. 2; xix. 13; xxxii. 29. Zeph. i. 5.

[6] Ezek. xliv. 7; ix. 15; xlviii. 11. Zeph. i. 4.

[7] Jer. vii. 17, 18.

It was only to be anticipated that the mass of the people, gross and indifferent on religious matters as the multitude always is, would readily follow any new movement, recommended at once by the patronage of the great, and by the escape it offered from the severe morals enforced by the prophets. But, unfortunately, even those who might have been expected to withstand the inroad of corruption, very generally gave way before it. Among the prophets only a few stood faithful to Jehovah; the majority either held their peace, or degraded their office for the basest ends. A terrible picture of their moral lapse has been left by their brethren who remained true to the old religion. They were "blind watch-dogs, that did not bark, but lay idly sleeping; insatiably greedy; set on gain; given up to strong drink." They were "light and treacherous." They affected to believe in idols. God had withdrawn His word from them. They had sunk in fact to the level of heathen diviners, and were mere deceivers of the people.[1] Numbers of the priests went over to the service of heathen altars.[2] The grossest immorality was common to many of them and of the prophets.[3] They polluted the sanctuary and openly violated the Law.[4] Nor were the laity behind their spiritual guides. The nobles were "roaring lions"; the judges,[5] "ravening wolves." They "set snares for men as fowlers do for birds."[6] They "hated the good and loved the evil;" they "abhorred justice and perverted equity."[7] They "devoured men more righteous than themselves."[8] Private virtue and truth seemed to have

[1] Isa. lvi. 9–12. Zeph. iii. 4. Jer. ii. 26; v. 13; xxvii. 9; xxix. 8, 9; xxiii. 16; iii. 31.
[2] Jer. vi. 13–15; viii. 10–12.
[3] Jer. xxiii. 9–11, 14.
[4] Zeph. iii. 4.
[5] Zeph. i. 8.
[6] Jer. v. 26.
[7] Mic. iii. 2–9.
[8] Hab. i. 13.

vanished. Men swore indifferently and with equal insincerity by Jehovah and by Moloch.[1] The godly had perished from the land; the honest from among men. Every one "did evil with both hands." Even the friend could not be trusted; a wife was ready to betray. The son dishonoured the father; the daughter rose against her mother; a man found his worst enemies in his own dependents.[2] An absorbing passion for gain possessed all classes.[3]

Yet there were not wanting some Abdiels, faithful among the faithless. Taking their lives in their hands, men like Isaiah and Micah boldly denounced the conduct of Manasseh, in re-introducing idolatry, with all its inherent abominations. Evil, they cried, which would make men's ears tingle, was preparing for Jerusalem and Judah, for their sin. Jehovah would destroy the holy city as He had destroyed Samaria, and root out its inhabitants as He had rooted out the House of Ahab. He would wipe Jerusalem clean of them as a man wipes out a dish, turning it upside down as he does so. They should become a spoil and prey to their enemies.[4] The great prophetic oration in the twenty-fourth to the twenty-seventh of Isaiah accords so well with these denunciations that it may best be referred to this period.[5] It runs thus:—

[1] Zeph. i. 5.
[2] Micah vii. 1–6.
[3] Zeph. i. 18.
[4] 2 Kings xxi. 12, 13.
[5] I am aware that chaps. xxiv.–xxvii. are attributed by some to a later prophet, but since there are many who, on the other hand, ascribe them to Isaiah, the point must be held as at least unsettled.* Some, in the same way, translate the different verbs in the first part as in the present tense; others, of equal authority, as in the future, which seems to me to suit the text better.

* Dillmann's *Knobel's Iesaia*, p. 206.

Behold,[1] Jehovah will make the land empty and waste, and turn it upside down,[2] and scatter abroad its inhabitants. All will share the same fate. It will be the same with the priest as with the people; with the master as with the servant; with the mistress as with the maid; with the seller as with the buyer; with the borrower as with the lender; with the debtor as with the creditor. The land will be utterly emptied and utterly plundered. For Jehovah has spoken this word.

The land—thus laid waste[3]—will be sad as a withered plant; its whole sweep[4] will fade away; the great ones of the land will lament.

For it is become defiled under its inhabitants; because they have transgressed the laws, violated the commandment; broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse has devoured the land, and the people are punished for their guilt; therefore the inhabitants are burnt up by God's judgments, and only a few are left.

The grapes shrivel;[5] the vine fades; all the merry-hearted sigh. The glad sound of timbrels is still; the noise of them that rejoice is hushed; the joy of the lyre is silent. Men shall no longer drink wine amidst singing; strong drink[6] will be bitter to them who take it. The city is a solitude;[7] it is broken down; the wrecked houses are closed by mounds of ruin, so that no one can enter them! In the fields, men lament aloud for the desolate vineyards; all gladness has darkened to night; the mirth of the land is gone. What remains of the city is desolation; the town gate is broken down into ruins.

For it shall be in the land,[1] in the midst of the nations, as at

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[1] Isa. xxiv. 1-3.

[2] See 2 Kings xxi. 12, 13, as quoted above.

[3] Isa. xxiv. 4-6.

[4] Lit. "the world," tābāl, a poetical word. It is here the whole Jewish world. It is used of the kingdom of Babylon in Isa. xiii. 11. Comp. orbis Romanus.

[5] Isa. xxiv. 7-12.

[6] Shākar = strong (intoxicating) drink of any kind.

[7] Same word as in Gen. i. 1 (tohu) = "without form," reduced to chaos.

[8] Isa. xxiv. 13-20.

the beating down of the fruit of the olive, and as at the grape gleaning when the vintage is over! Hardly any will be left. The few who escape will lift up their voice, rejoicing, and cry aloud—"Sing praise from the lands of the western sea to the Majesty of Jehovah, who has enabled us to reach them: exalt Jehovah in the lands of the sun, the east and southern countries: the name of Jehovah, the God of Israel, in the isles of the west!" From those fugitives, at the opposite ends of the earth, have we heard these songs of praise to the Righteous One;[1] these anticipations of victory to His people.[2]

The prophet cannot, however, share in their joyful expectations; he sees destruction before his nation.

But as for me, I can only say, Misery, misery is before me! Woe is me! The plunderers plunder; the plunderers plunder remorselessly. Terror, and a prison pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the land! And whoso flees from the noise of the terrible foe shall fall into the pit, and he who escapes from the pit shall be caught in the snare; for the windows of heaven shall be opened, and the pillars on which the earth rests shall shake. The kingdom[3] heaves, shakes, totters; it is utterly broken up; it is utterly shattered; it shakes to its centre; it staggers like a drunken man; it sways to and fro like a swinging hammock; for its sin lies heavy upon it; it falls, and shall rise no more.

The enemies of Israel overthrown, the Messianic future of her restoration opens to the eyes of the prophet. He sees the destruction of the enemy by whom Judah has been crushed, and the return of her sons from captivity. This is, therefore, a prediction of the fate of Babylon, which had not as yet even risen to be a kingdom.

[1] *Knobel. Diestel.* [2] *Ewald.*

[3] *Eichhorn.* I have preferred this reading as the only one to which the words immediately following could be justly applied. Most translators use the word "earth," but the earth cannot "fall," etc., except in imaginative application to the terrors of the last judgment. The whole prophecy is, however, highly figurative.

In that day[1] Jehovah shall visit in wrath the host of the powers of the air[2]—the prompters of men to evil—and also the kings of the earth here below. They shall be thrust into the prison-pit, like captives after battle, and shut up in the dungeon, and set free only after long years. And then shall the moon grow pale, and the sun's splendour faint; for Jehovah of Hosts shall again reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, with overpowering glory; surrounded by the heads of the nation—and Him, not the sun or moon, or host of heaven, as now—will the people worship.

The old theocracy thus set up once more; the oppressor destroyed, and the nation brought back to its own land triumphantly; a song of praise to God will rise from Mount Zion.

O Jehovah, Thou art my God![3] I will exalt Thee; I will praise Thy name! For Thou hast done wonderful things; Thou hast fulfilled Thine ancient purposes with faithfulness and truth. For Thou hast turned Babylon[4] from a great city into a ruined heap; the strong city into mounds of wreck; the palace city of the barbarians to be no city any longer;—it shall never be rebuilt! For this shall fierce peoples glorify Thee; the towns of warlike nations shall honour Thee. For Thou hast proved Thyself a strong defence to the weak; a strong defence to the needy in his distress; a cover from the storm; a shade from the heat, when the raging of the terrible ones was like that of a tempest against a wall. Thou hast abated the stormy triumphing of the alien, as Thou dost the heat of the waterless desert when Thou veilest it with clouds. As the heat is subdued by the shadow of clouds,[5] the exulting triumph-shouts of the terrible ones have been brought low.

And, now,[6] in this mountain—the hill of Zion—shall Jehovah

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[1] Isa. xxiv. 21-23. [2] Eph. iii. 10; vi. 12.

[3] Isa. xxv. 1-5.

[4] This is clearly the reference, though perhaps the prophet did not know the particular enemy by whom God would punish his people. Yet Babylon did not become independent, or begin its career of empire, till B.C. 625; long after Isaiah's death.

[5] *Furrer*, p. 105. *Land and Book*, p. 537.

[6] Isa. xxv. 6-8.

of Hosts make to all peoples a feast of fat things; a covenant feast on peace offerings, with wine, left till now on the lees, till it has become strong and bright; a feast of fat pieces, full of marrow; of strong wine, well strained! And He will destroy in this mountain the veil of mourning which has shrouded the faces of all peoples; the covering that has been spread over the heads of all nations.[1] He will destroy death for ever, and the Lord Jehovah will wipe away tears from off all faces, and the reproach His people have borne will He take away from off the whole earth. Jehovah has spoken it.

And it shall be said in that day[2] "See, this is our God; we have hoped in Him that He would save us; this is Jehovah, for whom we waited; let us exult and be glad in His salvation."

For the hand of Jehovah shall rest on this mountain, to protect His people, and Moab—so call we our enemies as a whole—shall be trampled under foot, even as crushed straw is trodden down in Madmenah, in the Moabite land. And Jehovah shall stretch forth His hands in the midst of Mount Zion, as a swimmer stretcheth them forth to swim, and he will humble their pride, together with the plots of their hands.[3] And the high-towering walls of Kir-Moab will He throw down, lay low, and level with the dust.

Another song of triumph, which will be sung in the land of Judah on that day, is now heard.

We have a strong city;[4] the saving help of our God is our defence, instead of walls and ditches. Open ye the gates, that a righteous nation, the nation that keeps the truth, now freed from

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[1] Primarily the Babylonian tyranny; but, also, in the end, the spiritual sorrows of mankind.

[2] Isa. xxv. 9-12.

[3] Every one in the East uses "hand over hand" swimming, raising each hand alternately as high as he can, and bringing it down on the water with sounding force. Most translators render the phrase "as crushed straw," by "is trodden down in the dung pool"; but there are no dung pools in the East. Madmenah was a place in Moab famed for its harvests. Neil's *Palestine*, p. 241.

[4] Isa. xxvi. 1-13.

its oppressors, may enter in.[1] It has well been said,[2] "The heart that is constant Thou keepest in perfect peace, for on Thee does it trust!" Trust ye in Jehovah for ever, for in Jehovah Jah ye have an everlasting Rock. For He has brought low them that dwelt on high; the lofty city, He brought it low, cast it down to the earth, hurled it to the dust. The foot trod it down, the foot of the poor, the feet of the oppressed. The path in which the righteous walk is smooth: Thou, Thyself, makest smooth the path of the just! Yea, in the path of Thy judgments have we waited for Thee, O Jehovah; the desire of our soul is towards Thy name, and the remembrance of Thee. With my soul have I longed for Thee in the night; with my spirit within me I sought Thee earnestly; for when Thy judgments smite the earth, its inhabitants learn righteousness. If grace be shown to the wicked he does not learn righteousness; even in a land where justice and right prevail, he will act unjustly, and has no eye for the Majesty of Jehovah. Jehovah, when Thine arm was lifted up, they would not see it; but they shall see, with shame, Thy zeal for Thy people; for fire will devour these, Thine adversaries. Jehovah will secure peace for us; for it is Thou who hast done all the work of our deliverance for us! O Jehovah, our God, other lords besides Thee—even the fierce Chaldean oppressors—have had dominion over us, but, through Thy doings, we are now free, and praise Thy name!

The prophet next sees in the distant future the sad condition of the exiles when they return. The nation seems as if it were dead. But Jehovah will raise it, and fill the land with men.

The dead live no more;[3] the shades rise not again; that it might be so, Thou hast visited and destroyed them, and made their very memory to perish. But Thou hast increased Thy people, O Jehovah; Thou hast increased the nation; Thou hast won for Thyself glory; Thou hast made wide the boundaries of the land. Jehovah, in their affliction they sought Thee; they poured out their prayer when Thy chastisements were upon

[1] The Jews returning from exile. [2] Ps. cxii. 7.
[3] Isa. xxvi. 14-19.

them. As a woman with child, when her delivery is near, is in pain and cries out, so were we before Thee, O Jehovah. We bore pains great as those of the travailing woman, in our flight from Babylon, and in our sufferings there. But while the woman rejoices in the birth of a living child, all our anguish has brought us nothing as yet, for our condition is wretched; the land lies waste; its inhabitants fallen![1] O that Thy dead could live again, my country! O that Thy dead bodies could arise! Awake and sing ye dwellers in the dust of the grave! For Thy dew—the favour of Jehovah—gives life, and through its mighty power, the earth shall bring to life the shades!

Go, my people,[2] into thy chambers, and shut thy door behind thee. Hide thee for a short moment, till the judgment of wrath has passed by. For, behold, Jehovah cometh out of His place in heaven, to visit the guilt of the inhabitants of the earth upon them; the blood of the slain of our people shall not be hidden in the ground; the earth shall disclose it, that it may cry for revenge: she will not hide the slain in her bosom, but send them forth from their graves, to be accusers before God, demanding wrath on the Chaldeans, their murderers!

In that day[3] will Jehovah visit Leviathan—the swift gliding serpent—Leviathan, the coiled-up serpent, and shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.[4] In that day, when this great world-

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[1] A paraphrase which seems to me to embody the sense.

[2] Isa. xxvi. 20-21. [3] Isa. xxvii. 1-5.

[4] Knobel, Diestel and others, think the epithets in this verse refer only to Babylon. Delitzsch and others suppose Assyria, Babylon and Egypt meant. Cheyne, and still others, fancy that all the enemies of God's people are intended. Leviathan is a Hebrew word, and occurs five times in the Bible; Job iii. 8, rendered "their mourning"; xli. 1 (xl. 25) = the crocodile; Ps. lxxiv. 15 = the princes of Pharaoh, the great crocodile or "dragon that lieth in the midst of the rivers;" Ezek. xxix. 3; Ps. civ. 26; it is some kind of whale, or sea monster. In the text the Chaldee paraphrase refers the two words to Pharaoh and to Sennacherib, respectively. It seems probable that 'Leviathan' is equivalent to our "monster," and may have included gigantic serpents, such as the python, which was worshipped by the Egyptians. The Rabbis say that God created leviathan male and female on

judgment shall have been accomplished, sing ye songs of praise respecting Zion, the beloved vineyard, thus: "I, Jehovah, am its Keeper; moment by moment do I water it; that nothing hurt it, I watch it night and day. My wrath against it has passed away; should I meet foes, thick and close as thorns and thistles, invading it, I would march against them in war, and burn them up together. But if they sought My protection and made Me their God, desiring to be at peace with Me and My people, then would I allow them to make such peace with Me." Only on such conditions will strangers be permitted in the bounds of My people.

This care of Jehovah will have glorious results.

In future times shall Jacob take root in the land:[1] Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the whole face of the land with fruit.

The chastisement with which God has visited His people, compared with that inflicted on their enemies, is a proof of His gracious designs.

Hath He smitten him (Judah) as He smote his smiter?[2] Or has he been slain as those who slew him are slain? *He* has been visited only with disquiet and exile. With just measure of penalty Thou didst contend with him, when Thou drovest him out of the land, as with a fierce blast in the day of storm.[3]

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the fifth day, but presently killed the female, and having salted it, laid it up, to be feasted on at the coming of the Messiah. A tabernacle for the righteous is then to be made of its skin, which will shine from one end of the earth to the other, etc. (Isa. lx. 3). Buxtorff, *Heb. and Ch. Lex.*, p. 1128. Hershom, *Treas. of Talmud*, p. 203.

The word "dragon"—tannin—seems to mean any great monster, whether of the sea or the land. It is used fourteen times in the Bible. See Gen. i. 21; Job vii. 12; Isa. xxvii. 1, etc. It appears to refer to a great sea monster, such as a whale, shark, or the like. In Exod. vii. 9; Deut. xxxii. 33; Ps. xci. 13, etc., it is a serpent; and in Isa. li. 9; Ezek. xxxii. 3; Ps. lxxiv. 13, a crocodile, as emblem of Egypt.

[1] Isa. xxvii. 6. [2] Isa. xxvii. 7, 8.

[3] Lit., east wind. The east and south-east winds come from

But by this visitation[1] shall the guilt of Jacob be purged;[2] for the fruit of the removal of his sin shall be that he shall break down his heathen altars, and shatter all their stones into fragments, small as pieces of crumbled lime, and Asherahs and sun obelisks shall no more rise aloft in his midst.

For Jerusalem,[3] the strong city, shall be desolate in the days of your exile; a habitation lonely and forsaken as the wilderness; there shall the calf feed and lie down, browsing on the twigs of the wild bushes, with which the undisturbed soil shall be overgrown.[4] The withered twigs of the winter shall be broken off for fuel; women shall come and burn them. For the people have no understanding, and therefore He that made them will not have mercy on them, and He that formed them will show them no favour.

But after those days,[5] when the time of His pity has come, Jehovah will have a rich harvest of mercy, and shall gather Israel from the great river Euphrates to the river of Egypt, the Wady el Arish, as a man beats down and gathers the olives in their season, and ye shall be gathered one by one, ye children of Israel! And on that day shall a great trumpet—the sign of the return—be blown, and those that were lost in the land of Assyria, and the banished ones in the land of Egypt, shall come back, and cast themselves down before Jehovah in the holy mountain in Jerusalem.

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waterless hot regions, and wither up vegetation. Wanting ozone, they are very enfeebling. The east wind often blows like a glowing furnace blast, for several days consecutively, over Palestine, in May and October. It is the sirocco. When it rises to a storm, it veils the sky in a dusky yellow shroud of sand-clouds, through which the sun shines, pale and shorn of its beams, like a smoking globe of fire. Its whirlwinds raise pillars of sand and dust into the air, which seem at a distance like pillars of smoke. Men flee before it, and hide wherever they can. Furrer, *Bib. Lex.*, vol. v. p. 697.

[1] Isa. xxvii. 9.

[2] The verb Kaphar, here used, is translated in the A.V. "to make an atonement," "to make reconciliation," "to pacify," "to forgive," "to purge away." It means, primarily, "to cover."

[3] Isa. xxvii. 10, 11.

[4] *Furrer*, p. 105.

[5] Isa. xxvii. 12, 13.

To this wonderful prophetic picture, the thirty-fifth chapter adds a further vision of the triumphal circumstances of the return from Babylon—the whole couched in the noblest language of poetry.

The wilderness[1] and the sun-scorched land shall rejoice before the returning exiles: the desert shall be glad and blossom like the rose.[2] It will blossom abundantly and rejoice, breaking out, as it were, into joy and singing. The verdant glory of Lebanon shall be given it; the leafy splendour of Carmel and Sharon.[3] Men shall see the glory of Jehovah; the majesty of our God!

The prophet now addresses the exiles directly.

Strengthen the hands[4] that hang down, discouraged and irresolute; straighten up the tottering knees! Say to the faint-hearted, "Be strong! fear not. See, your God comes to avenge you, to give you a godlike recompense! He Himself comes to save you!"

In that day,[5] the eyes of the blind shall be opened; the ears of the deaf unstopped. The lame will leap like a deer; the tongue of the dumb will sing. For flowing waters shall break out, before them, in the wilderness, and brooks in the desert. And the deceitful mirage will become a real lake,[6] and the thirsty

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[1] Isa. xxxv. 1, 2.

[2] Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 476, thinks the sweet-scented narcissus is meant. So Houghton. Layard repeatedly speaks of the shortlived splendour of colour into which the Mesopotamian desert bursts after the spring rains.

[3] *Land and Book*, p. 112.

[4] Isa. xxxv. 3, 4.

[5] Isa. xxxv. 5–10.

[6] "I once gave chase to a herd of antelopes near Aleppo. The day was intensely hot, and the antelopes made direct towards a vast mirage, which covered the whole eastern horizon. They seemed to be literally leaping through the water, and I could see their figure below the surface, and reversed, with the utmost distinctness." *Land and Book* p. 523. The Arab word for mirage is Serab, and the word in the text is Sarab. Isaiah, therefore, doubtless refers to this deceitful phenomenon. It is a mere optical illusion.

land springs of water; in the couching place of jackals shall spring up grass, and the reeds and rushes that mark living streams. And a raised and made way will stretch before them: it will be called "The holy way;" it shall be trodden by no unclean person, but shall be only for the clean. No one who walks on it, however simple he be, shall wander from it, and lose himself in the wilderness around. No lion shall be there, to molest; no ravening beast shall set foot on it, or be found there: the released exiles alone shall walk on it. And the freed ones of Jehovah shall return, and come to Zion with loud jubilations: everlasting joy, like an unfading crown, shall be on their heads. They shall have joy and gladness, and the sorrow and sighing of exile shall flee away!

Words such as these, mingling denunciation of popular sins with gloomy predictions of the overthrow of the state, and the deportation of the citizens and their fellow-countrymen, to a distant land, as slaves and exiles, must have created great excitement in the small community of Jerusalem. Spoken by one like Isaiah, now old and venerable, and by Micah, the living counterpart of the great Elijah—rough clad, austere, alarming—the heathen party now in power would feel them as dangerous politically, as they were hateful on other grounds. It must have seemed imperative to silence such voices, if the idolatrous reaction were to succeed. It was attempted, therefore, as the first step in persecution, to turn them to ridicule. The scoffers "opened wide their mouths" at them, in scorn and mocking, and even thrust out their tongues at them as they spoke.[1] Ere long, harsher measures were used. But, amidst all this social proscription, the faithful among the prophets, and the small but earnest band who followed them, stood firm. Despised and insulted daily, they still boldly pleaded for Jehovah, and denounced the growing abom-

[1] Isa. lvii. 4.

inations and immorality of idolatry. In the midst of a hostile population, they stood forth as confessors of the faith of their fathers. The disciples of Isaiah,[1] who in these evil times "dwelt before Jehovah,"[2] delighting above all things to behold His beauty and to enquire in His temple[3]—the psalmists who, under Hezekiah, had added to the songs of God's people, inspired odes still found in the canon; the true-hearted men who had, everywhere, through Judah and Israel, collected the ancient sacred books; the "meek of the land," who sat at the feet of the prophets, and made their instruction the light of their feet and the lamp of their path; above all, those whom the glowing eloquence of Isaiah and his brethren had kindled to a prophetic enthusiasm for Jehovah, akin to their own—formed a community, small, perhaps, in numbers, but strong in the depth of their convictions and the loftiness of their creed—"the congregation of the saints"[4]—the faithful witnesses for truth upon the earth.

Between these and their fellow-countrymen, the relations grew more and more strained, as corruption and idolatry spread. Life was daily more bitter for the faithful; social intercourse more interrupted. Parties became more narrowly defined. Existence seemed a burden to the godly. The mockery and roughness of the multitude grew more intense. Everything foreboded the breaking out of an organized persecution, to sweep the last traces of Jehovah-worship from the land.

[1] Isa. viii. 16.
[2] Isa. xxiii. 18.
[3] Ps. xxvii. 4.
[4] Ps. lxxxix. 16.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE GREAT PERSECUTION.

THE intense mutual hatred of the heathen party and the worshippers of Jehovah had twice before—under Ahab in Israel, and Athaliah in Judah—culminated in open violence, and the friends of the old religion must have felt, that under Manasseh, idolatry would, ere long, slake its enmity in their blood. It had too many grudges to repay, to let them hope for quiet toleration. Nor were their gloomy fears unrealized. At a very early period in the new reign, if tradition be correct, the court party, heading the thoughtless and degenerate multitude, grew tired of mere insult and mockery, and demanded blood, and the darkest page in the annals of the nation followed. There had been no such day, since the miseries of their fathers in Egypt under the ancient Pharaohs. Even Athaliah had not dared to close the temple; but it was now defiled by idols and idol altars, so that the godly could no longer enter it. The blood of the saints was shed on every hand. Braving all danger, true prophets like Isaiah, Micah, and Hozai,[1] faithfully did their duty; boldly rebuking even the king, in public, for his apostasy. But their fidelity only roused him to fiercer excesses. Raging like a destroying lion, to use the words of

[1] 2 Kings xxi. 10. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 18, 19. The word rendered "the seers" is, in Hebrew, Hozai, apparently a proper name.

Jeremiah,[1] he put to death the worshippers of Jehovah, till it seemed to contemporaries as if Jerusalem were a bowl filled to the brim with their blood.[2] If he could silence the prophets and their adherents no other way, he would do so by the sword. Some were killed almost daily.[3] Nobles who took their part were dashed from the rocky cliffs of the city hills.[4] The days of Alva in Holland, or of Charles IX. in France, or of the Covenanters under Charles II., in Scotland, were anticipated in the Jewish capital. The streets were red with blood. Tradition has assigned Isaiah's death to this period. He was now about eighty-six years of age, and, apart from the sanctity of his life and the splendour of his genius, might well have been spared as the honoured friend and counsellor of Hezekiah. But his very age and dignity were against him, making his fiery words still weightier; for he still witnessed openly for Jehovah, fearlessly exposing and denouncing the iniquity of both high and low. An oration, of which part has come down to us, may have been the immediate cause of his final proscription by Manasseh. In this grand indictment, as was natural in a true prophet, the corrupt members of his order, and the apostate priests who had gone over to the service of idols, or were cravenly silent in those evil days, were first assailed:

Come hither,[5]—he cries,—all ye wild beasts of the field, and devour the flock of Jehovah; come, all ye wild beasts of the woods! It is left defenceless to you! For its watchmen are blind; they keep no look out; they are, all of them, dumb dogs; they cannot bark: they are not kozim—true seers—but hozim, mere ravers and dreamers;—lying down, they care only to sleep.

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[1] Jer. ii. 30.
[2] 2 Kings xxi. 16.
[3] Jos., *Ant.*, X. iii. 1. Jer. ii. 30. Neh. ix. 26.
[4] Ewald, quoting Ps. cxli. 6, 7.
[5] Isa. lvi. 9-12.

Yet they are greedy, and can never be satisfied; they crave money and gifts of all kinds, continually.[1] Shepherds are they that give no heed to their calling; keep no watch over the sheep, and know not how to do so. Unworthy of their office, they take no care of the flock, but unconcernedly leave it to its enemies, or let it wander whither it pleases; they all turn to their own way, each to his own ungodly profit,[2] from the highest of them to the lowest. "Come," say they, one to the other, "let us fetch wine, got from our gains, and let us have a carouse on strong drink; and let us do the same to-morrow, and make the day a special feast."

The thought of what was passing around him at the moment now rises in the mind of the prophet; the martyrdoms that were daily taking place.

(While faithless men thus not only live, but flourish in their iniquity), the righteous man perishes[3] because he is righteous, and no man takes it to heart; godly men are taken away, and no one considers that the righteous are thus let die, to keep them from seeing the evil to come, and perhaps from falling by its sore trials. He passes away into peace: they rest in their quiet beds in the dust; all who have walked in the ways of God.

Their sufferings and martyr death recalls their worth, and the indignities they have suffered, while the contrast rises between them and those by whom they have been hunted to death.

But as for you,[4] ye sons of the sorcerers, heathen in your superstitions and in your morals; ye brood of the adulterer and the harlot, draw near, hither! Of whom do ye thus make sport? At whom do you make mouths, and stick out your tongue?[5] It is like you. But are ye yourselves not fitter objects of mockery? Are ye not children of sin; the spawn of the faithless? Turning

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[1] Mic. iii. 5–11. Ezek. xiii. 19; xxii. 25.
[2] By bribes, gifts, etc., to prophecy falsely.
[3] Isa. lvii. 1, 2. [4] Isa. lvii. 3–6.
[5] Chap. lxvi. 5; xxxvii. 23. Ps. xxii. 7; xxxv. 21.

away from Jehovah, do ye not burn with unholy lust for your idols and their impurities, under the terebinths, and under every green tree of your idol groves ?[1] Do you not sacrifice children to Moloch and Baal in the valley of Hinnom, and in the dark caves of the rocks, in torrent valleys, to which ye go for the water needed in your hideous burnt offerings ?[2] Are not your sacred fetish stones[3] in these wadys, smooth with the oil you pour over them, your "portion"[4] and delight, instead of Jehovah ?[5] These, these are your choice! To them, even to them, do ye pour out drink-offerings, and present meat-offerings. Shall I, says Jehovah, look quietly at such an insult to my honour ? On a great and high hill[6] thou, leaving thy Husband,[7] Jehovah, hast set thy bed to commit impurity in idol worship ;[8] thither thou goest up to offer sacrifice. The memorial of thy God—"Jehovah is our God, Jehovah is one"—written on the posts and doors of thy house,[9] thou hast removed behind these posts and doors, that they may not shame thee in thy unfaithfulness ;[10]

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[1] Hos. iv. 15. Isa. i. 29. Ezek. vi. 13.

[2] This awful worship was apparently carried out with secret rites, in lonely places, as well as at Hinnom.

[3] In the earliest times such stones had been familiar to the Hebrews (Gen. xxviii. 11, 18), but they had been put to heathen uses in later ages, instead of being dedicated, as at first, to Jehovah Knobel thinks the reference here is to idols of any kind.

[4] Jer. x. 16. Ps. xvi. 5; lxxiii. 26; cxix. 57; cxliii. 5.

[5] Jer. x. 16. Deut. iv. 19.

[6] Isa. lvii. 7, 8.

[7] Isa. i. 21. Hos. i.-iii. Ezek. xvi. 23.

[8] The inherent impurity of heathenism is illustrated by the following extract from *Six Years in India* (p. 109), by Mrs. (General) Colin Mackenzie. "We passed to-day a pretty little girl, singing at the top of her voice, and C. told me that the words of the song were so utterly detestable and vile, that hardly any man among the worst in London would sing them, unless he were drunk. Nothing can equal the abomination of the Hindu deities and their worship. The verses taught to children at school are such as cannot be repeated."

[9] Deut. vi. 9; xi. 20. See page 15.

[10] So Knobel, Diestel, Delitzsch, and others. Cheyne thinks

thou hast uncovered thyself and gone up, and made broad thy bed for thy sin, and chosen a paramour from among them.[1] Thou lovest their bed; thou choosest the side of it thou likest for thyself.[2]

As a harlot goes forth, anointed with oil[3] and fragrant with costly perfumes, to seek new lovers, thou has gone outside thine own land, to Baal, the king,[4] to learn from his foreign temples what thou couldst copy in thine own. Thou hast even sent thy envoys far off to distant countries, to the shrines of remote gods, to bring back their worship. Thou hast, indeed, gone so far as to debase thyself to honour the infernal gods—the gods of Sheol the abyss beneath the earth.[5]

Thou hast wearied thyself with the length of these journeys; yet thou hast not said, "I will go no further, I will give up." Thy zeal and eagerness have always given thee strength to complete the long pilgrimage, and have kept thee from breaking down or being discouraged.

Of whom, says Jehovah,[6] hast thou been afraid or alarmed, that thou shouldst have played the traitor to Me, and not remembered Me, or laid to heart My promise of being thy protector? Is it not because I have been long silent, and have let thy sins continue, that thou no longer fearest me? Thou thinkest I have

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that the view of the Targum and Jerome, by which "memorial" means idol, or obscene idolatrous symbol, is intended.

[1] That is, thou choosest out a special idol, and surrenderest thyself to its lewd worship.

[2] Delitzsch and Cheyne, following Hitzig, Ewald, Umbreit and others, translate this phrase: "Thou lookest at the phallus"—the obscene symbol of Baal worship. But Knobel and Diestel reject this.

[3] **Isa. lvii. 9, 10.**

[4] Baal was called "King Baal," and "the King of Eternity," etc. Ges., *Monumen. Phœn.*, pp. 197, 202, 205, 284. Möver's *Phönizier*, vol. i. p. 400

[5] So Knobel, Diestel, and others; Delitzsch and Cheyne, on the other hand, think the reference is to political embassies to the kings of Assyria, Egypt, etc. But this does not seem to me to suit the connection.

[6] **Isa. lvii. 11-13.**

forsaken thee, but thou doest Me great wrong. But, now, I will make known thy fancied righteousness. Yet what will it avail; what will thy works profit thee, in which it consists? When thou criest, let the herd of thy gods save thee! But the wind shall sweep them all off: a breath shall carry them away. Yet, he who trusts in Me shall possess this land and inherit My holy mountain!

The prophet now sees the people in exile, and hears the voice of Jehovah summoning to preparations for their return.

A Voice calls, "Cast ye up, cast ye up[1] a highway through the desert; prepare a way; clear the stones from the track, out of the path of My people."

Jehovah has, thus, not abandoned Israel, but designs their restoration hereafter. He now proceeds to tell them the grounds on which they may hope for it.

For thus saith the High and Lofty One:[2] the eternal King; whose name is the Holy One: I dwell in the heavens—the high and holy place,[3] but with him also, that is of a contrite[4] and humble spirit; to revive the spirit of the humble and the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always angry; for the spirit would faint before me, and the souls which I have made. For his wandering desires, forsaking My ways and seeking his own—I was angry and smote him. I hid Myself, and was wroth, because he went on, perversely, in the way of his own heart. I have seen the thorny paths he has trodden—he is wrong in saying they were hidden from Jehovah[5]—and will heal him. I will lead him in ways of pleasantness, and give him and his mournful ones consolation for all their sorrows. Thus saith Jehovah[6] that creates the fruit of the mouth, bringing forth songs of joy and thanksgiving: "Peace, peace, I

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[1] Isa. lvii. 14. Heap up the soil to a raised and level road.
[2] Isa. lvii. 15-18. [3] The heavenly temple. Chap. vi. 1.
[4] Crushed and penitent. [5] Chap. xl. 27.
[6] Isa. lvii. 19-21.

proclaim, to the far off and to the near: to the distant exile and to him who has remained in the land."

But the wicked are like the uptost sea, which never rests, but casts up mire and mud continually. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.[1]

Such an appeal, mingling with its just denunciation and keen irony, the tenderest patriotism and the sublimest faith; condemning the present, but lighting up the future with the promise of Messianic glory; might have won respect and admiration for the aged prophet, alike for its fearlessness, its loyalty to his people, and its lofty poetry. But fanaticism neither reasons nor feels. Such a witness against the sins of the day could no longer be endured. If lesser men perished, Isaiah could not be suffered to live. A very old mulberry tree, near the Pool of Siloam, on the slopes of Ophel, outside the south-east wall of Jerusalem, is the traditional spot of his martyrdom. There, it is said by the Rabbis, and in the apocryphal "Ascension of Isaiah," he was sawn asunder[2] by order of Manasseh, for refusing to bow down to the king's idols. "And while the saw cut into his flesh," says the tradition, "Isaiah uttered no complaints and shed no tears, but he ceased not to commune with the Holy Spirit till the saw had cloven him to the middle of his body."[3] If the prophets "hewed the ungodly" with the words of Jehovah:[4] if some of them, in despair at the national defection from Him, went about, like Micah,

[1] This section of Isaiah, at least to the 11th verse of the 57th chapter, is assigned by no less keen a critic than Ewald to the reign of Manasseh, and treated as undoubtedly written by Isaiah. That others should refer it to the period of the Exile only shows how arbitrary are the standards of critical judgment. As to the origin and date of the later chapters of Isaiah, I shall speak more fully hereafter.

[2] Heb. xi. 37. [3] Ascensio Iesaiæ v. 11–14. [4] Hos. vi. 5.

'stripped and naked," "wailing like the dragons, and rying out like the ostriches;"[1] the counterpart of the ervishes of modern Asia; the king and people could, at east, take the wild revenge of torture and the sword. But amidst all their trials of cruel mockings[2] and scourgngs; of bonds and imprisonment; of stoning; being awn asunder, and of nameless agonies besides, the lood of the martyrs then, as always, proved the seed of he Church. A Psalm which Ewald assigns to this eriod, and which in any case suits it, still survives[3]—

Jehovah! I cry to Thee: O make haste to me!
O hear my voice when I call upon thee!
Let my prayer rise before Thee as the odour of incense,
The lifting up of my hands like the evening sacrifice!

Set a watch, O Jehovah, to my mouth;
Guard the gates of my lips;
Let not my heart be inclined to anything evil—
To do wrong with men set on iniquity;
And may I not taste of their dainties!

Let the righteous smite me in love and reprove me:
It will be like oil of anointing[4] which my head will not refuse.[5]
For I still meet the attacks, even of the wicked, with prayer.
When their best men[6] are hurled down the stony rocks
They will listen to my words as welcome.
As the earth is torn up and broken by the plough,
So are our bones scattered at the gates of the grave!

But to Thee, O Jehovah my God, are mine eyes;
In Thee is my trust; let not my life be poured out!
Keep me from the snares that men spread for me;
The traps of the workers of iniquity!
Let the wicked fall into their own nets;
While, withal, I make my escape.

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[1] Micah i. 8. [2] Heb. xi. 36. Isa. lvii. 4. [3] **Ps. cxli.** Delitzsch calls it an Evening Psalm in the time of **Absalom.**
[4] "Anointing oil," at feasts. [5] *Delitzsch.* [6] Lit. nobles or judges

But perhaps the seventy-third Psalm,[1] whether dating from this period or not, is the best embodiment of the feelings of the godly in those evil days.

Good, and good only, is Elohim to Israel:
To them—that is—of a pure heart!
But I—my feet were almost gone,
My steps had well nigh slipped.
For I was envious at the boastful haughty ones;
When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
For they suffer no distress;[2]
Their persons are healthy and well fed.
They do not share in the troubles of other men,
Nor are they plagued like others.
Hence pride sits on their necks like a chain;
Violence hangs round them like a robe.
Their sins burst out from their fat insensate hearts,[3]
The evil thoughts of their breasts swell over.

They scoff and talk wickedly of the oppression they design;
They speak haughtily, as if above other men.
They turn their mouth to the heavens,
And their tongue walketh through the earth.[4]
By this, the people who follow them, are drawn in their train,
And drink in, greedily, the poison water of their words, as if from a full cup.

Hence, they say, "How does God know?
And is there knowledge in the Most High?"
Behold, these are the ungodly—
All their lives heedless of God, they are yet the most prosperous;
It has been of no good that I have cleansed my heart

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[1] Ps. lxxiii.

[2] Ewald and Delitzsch.

[3] This sense is, in effect, adopted by Ewald from the Sept., Vulgate, and many moderns. A change in one letter in one of the Hebrew words makes the difference.

[4] Luther's translation is striking:—

What they wish, that must be ordered by Heaven;
What they say, that must be done on earth.

And washed my hands in innocency;
I have been plagued day by day,
My chastisement comes with each new morning.

Should I think, "I will say the same as they,"
I should be untrue to myself as one of the race of Thy children.
Yet, when I pondered the matter, to solve it,
It was, as I felt, too deep to understand—
Till I went into the sanctuary [1] of God
And marked the *end* of such men.
Thou lettest them stand only on slippery ground,
And, at last, Thou castest them down to ruin.

How are they made desolate in a moment!
They are swept away, like dust before the storm;
They perish with a terrible destruction.
As a dream passes when one awakes,
So, O Lord, when Thou rousest Thyself to note them,
Thou wilt mock at such shadows!

When my heart has been thus embittered,
And my very soul, as it seemed, pierced through,
I was dull, and without sense;
Like the stupid Behemoth [2] in Thy sight!

But, as for me, I am continually with Thee;
Thou hast held my right hand;
Thou wilt guide me by Thy counsel,
And, hereafter, receive me to glory.
Whom have I in heaven but Thee?
But if I have Thee, I care nothing for aught else on earth.[3]
Let my heart and my flesh melt away,
God is the strength [4] of my heart, and my Portion for ever!

For, lo, they that are far from Thee shall perish;
Thou destroyest every one that is faithless to Thee:

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[1] Lit. sanctuaries (Ps. lxviii. 35). It seems here to refer to the different parts into which the temple was divided. *Mühlau und Volck.*

[2] Behemoth was the Egyptian name for the hippopotamus—the synonym of stupidity.

[3] Luther, and virtually Delitzsch. [4] Lit., rock.

But, as for me, nearness to God is my joy;
I put my trust in the Lord Jehovah
To set forth and praise all Thy works!

A Psalm like this reveals the spiritual trials of the faithful in days such as those of Manasseh. The old belief, that godliness brought worldly prosperity, had been rudely shaken, and the life beyond shone out more clearly as the earth grew dark. The immortality of the soul was realized more fully than hitherto. Death no longer wore the gloomy aspect it had borne even to the good Hezekiah. Men were no more to cry out in their sickness or troubles, "In death there is no remembrance of Thee; in the grave who shall give Thee thanks?"[1] "What profit is there in my blood when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise Thee? Shall it declare Thy truth?"[2] Nobler thoughts, such as we find in some other Psalms, took the place of dispiriting doubts. "Thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One[3] to see corruption. Thou wilt make me know the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy: in Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."[4] "As for me, I shall[5] behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake, with Thy likeness."[6] "God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol; for He shall receive me."[7] Such great scholars as Dillmann, G. Baur, and Ewald assign the Book of Job, with its bright anticipations of immortality, to the first half of the seventh century before Christ—that is, to the age of

[1] Ps. vi. 5.
[2] Ps. xxx. 9. See also Ps. xxxix. and Ps. lxxxviii. 10–12.
[3] In Heb. "Holy Ones," but a Masoretic note directs that the singular be used.
[4] Ps. xvi. 10, 11.
[5] Or, let me.
[6] Ps. xvii. 15.
[7] Ps. xlix. 15.

Manasseh.[1] Consoling hopes of the future, under God's revelation, were becoming stronger in proportion to the trouble and gloom of the age.

Some other relics of the sacred poetry of Israel seem to light up still further these terrible years. The forty-ninth, the seventy-seventh, and the hundred and fortieth Psalms[2] appear, from internal evidence, to be utterances from amidst the fiery trials of Manasseh's reign.

Hear this, all ye people,[3]
Give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world,
Low and high, rich and poor, alike!
My mouth shall speak of wisdom,[4]
The meditation of my heart shall be of the insight into things which true wisdom gives.
I will incline mine ear to the heavenly voice which speaks to me darkly,
I will utter, to the strains of the harp, my dim weighty thoughts.

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[1] Delitzsch thinks it was composed in the Solomonic Age. Art. *Hiob* in *Herzog*. But see Dillmann's *Hiob*, p. 27; G. Baur, in *Riehm*. art *Hiob*; Ewald's *Geschichte*, vol. iii, p. 705.

[2] The 49th Psalm is of uncertain date, but suits the reign of Manasseh closely. The 77th is assigned by Delitzsch to the time of Manasseh or Josiah. The 140th is ascribed to Manasseh's reign by Ewald. Nothing is more arbitrary, however, than the dates given to most of the Psalms by different critics. Thus the 77th is assigned by Olshausen and Hitzig to the time of the Maccabees; to the time of the Babylonian exile, by Ewald and many others; and to the destruction of Samaria, by Moll. The 140th, according to Delitzsch, is a late imitation of David; Hitzig assigns it to the time of Johannes Hyrcanus, B.C. 135–106; Ewald, to that of Manasseh; Rosenmüller, to that of the Return from Babylon; while Moll thinks it may be David's. Can anything show more forcibly the arrogance of such dogmatism, as that of the latest school of Biblical critics as to the date of the different Psalms? How much is their confident language worth?

[3] Ps. xlix.

[4] The great theme since the time of Solomon.

Why should I fear when wickedness rules;
When the evil plots of liers in wait are round me;
Of men, who trust in their wealth, and boast of their great riches
Alas![1] no one of them can redeem his own life,
Or pay to God a ransom for it,
That he should live on in the earth and not see the grave.
For the redemption price of the soul[2] is too high for man,
And he must leave it unpaid for ever!
No; he, also, will see the tomb!
The wise die; so, also, the fool and the dullard,
And leave to others their wealth!
Their graves are their homes for ever;[3]
Their abodes from generation to generation;
Though, while alive, men everywhere lauded their names.[4]

Such a man abides not in honour
But is like the beasts that perish.[5]

This is the lot of these vain confident fools,
And of those, after them, who follow their teaching.
Like a flock of sheep they are folded in Sheol, the underworld.
Death is their shepherd, who leads them forth to *his* pastures;
The upright shall have dominion over them;
Their beauty shall soon fade away,
Sheol, the underworld, shall be their dwelling!

But Elohim will redeem my soul from the hand of Sheol,
For He shall receive me![6]

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[1] Heb. *Ach*: not *brother* only, but also an exclamation = Ah! Alas!

[2] = Life.

[3] By the change of two letters. So *Sept.*, *Targ.*, *Pesh.*, *Olshausen*, *Ewald*, and others.

[4] *Gesenius*. *Ewald*. I think they are right.

[5] Lit., the cattle that men slaughter so early and suddenly cut off.

[6] Ewald and Lengerke render this line: When it shall have seized me. Mühlau und Volck, and Delitzsch, have the rendering I have adopted.

Be not thou, then, afraid when one grows rich,
Vhen the glory of his house increases.
or when he dies he shall carry nothing away;
is glory shall not go down to Sheol with him.
hough in his life-time he boasted of his fortune,
nd men praised him—as they always do him who does well to himself—
et he will come to the generation of his fathers,
Vho shall never more behold the light of the sun.

Such a man abides not in honour,
ut is like the beasts that perish.

A similar strain runs through the seventy-seventh salm.[1]

I will cry aloud to Elohim; yes, I will cry to Elohim aloud,
nd He will hear me!
n the day of my trouble I sought the Lord;
y hand was stretched out in prayer all night, without ceasing;
y soul could not find comfort.
I thought upon God I could but moan;
I kept thinking—my spirit was overwhelmed.

Thou didst hold my eyelids from closing;
was so troubled I could not speak.

I called to remembrance the days of old,
he years of times gone by;
thought in the night, of my joyful songs in the past;
y spirit pondered anxiously why they were gone!

"Will the Lord cast me off for ever?
ill He be favourable no more?
His mercy clean gone for ever?
ill His promise never be fulfilled, from generation to generation?
as El forgotten to be gracious?
as He, in anger, shut up His tender mercies?"

[1] Ps. lxxvii.

Then thought I, my trouble comes thus :
But the right hand of the Most High still reigns;
Therefore I will think of the works of Jehovah,
And recall to my mind all Thy wonders, of old.
I will meditate on all Thy works,
And let my thoughts dwell on Thy deeds!

Elohim, Thy way is in holiness!
Who is so great a God as Elohim?
Thou art that God who doest wonders,
Who hast made known Thy might among the nations.
Thou didst redeem with Thine arm Thy people,
The sons of Jacob and Joseph.

The waters saw Thee, O Elohim,
The waters saw Thee, and whirled back;
The sea trembled in its depths.
The clouds poured out water;
The upper skies sent forth their voice;
Thine arrows, the lightning, flew around;
Thy thunder rolled along in the whirlwind;
Thy lightnings illuminated the world:
The earth trembled and shook.

But, amidst all, Thy way was through the sea,
Thy path through the great waters;
Though Thy footsteps were not seen.

Thou leddest Thy people, by the hand of Moses and Aaron,
As a shepherd leads his flock!

Still another of these most ancient of lyrics—the hundred and fortieth Psalm—seems to date from the same dark years.

Deliver me, O Jehovah, from evil men;
Preserve me from men full of violence,
Who think out evil in their hearts
And stir up strife continually.

They have tongues sharp pointed as those of serpents,
Adder's poison is under their lips!

Keep me, O Jehovah, from the hands of the wicked,
Preserve me from men full of violence,
Who design to trip up my steps!
The haughty ones have hidden snares and cords to take me;
They have spread a net for me in my path:
They have set traps for me.

But I say to Jehovah: Thou art my God:
Hear, O Jehovah, my loud supplications!
Jehovah, the Lord, is the strength of my salvation:
Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.
Grant not, O Jehovah, the wishes of the wicked;
Let not his devices succeed.

When those that hem me about raise their head,
May the evil they have wished for *me* cover themselves.
Let punishments from Thee, like burning coals, be hurled down on them;
Let them be thrown into the fire;
Into deep pits in the earth, from which they can never come out!
Let not the slanderer be established on the earth;
The violent man—may the wicked hunt him to destruction!

I know that Jehovah will maintain the cause of the afflicted;
The rights of the poor:[1]
The righteous will, surely, give thanks to Thy name:
The upright shall dwell in Thy presence.

With such enthusiasm for the ancient national faith in the bosoms of many, it was impossible that any persecution could extirpate the worship of Jehovah. But it was the age of the martyrs: the counterpart in the ancient history of the Church, of its fiery trials under Antiochus, Decius, and Diocletian. The pure gold was being refined in the furnace, to come out all the brighter in the happier but too brief days of Josiah. The persecution under Jezebel, in the Northern Kingdom, had ended in the ruin of Ahab's House, but the truth had died; in Judah the

[1] The "afflicted" and "poor" are the persecuted people of God.

prophets and people had to yield for the time, but the truth was finally triumphant. A purer spiritual light than it had ever before enjoyed, broke over the land from amidst the darkness of Manasseh's reign.

The political results of the heathen policy were, as usual, disastrous. Jeremiah expressly traces the ruin of the kingdom to Manasseh,[1] and so also does the Book of Kings.[2] Philistia, Edom, Moab, and Ammon revolted during his reign, and were independent at his death. Judah sank into contempt. Moab and Ammon heaped contemptuous reproaches and revilings on its people, and made insulting forays across the border.[3] Henceforth, except for a short time in the reign of Josiah, they were no longer under the Jewish yoke.

But the heaviest blow came from Assyria, the ancient enemy of the Palestine nations. Sennacherib had reigned fourteen years after the accession of Manasseh. The terrible catastrophe his armies had suffered in Philistia and before Jerusalem, under Hezekiah, had effectually kept him from again invading Canaan, if indeed the disturbed condition of his eastern dominions permitted his doing so. Family troubles, moreover, crippled him. Polygamy had surrounded him with the sons of different mothers, each hoping to be named successor to the throne, and scheming to secure the great prize. Among them, however, one, Esarhaddon, though not the eldest, was the favourite, and, though not heir presumptive, had been marked by the special honour of having a private will made by his father in his favour, leaving him an immense treasure, deposited on his behalf with some

[1] Jer. xv. 4. [2] 2 Kings xxi. 11; xxiii. 26; xxiv. 3, 4.
[3] Zeph. ii. 8–10. For "magnified themselves against their border," *read* "showed their pride by violating." See also Jer. xlvii. xlviii. xlix.

priests, in the great temple of Nebo, for safety. "I, Sennacherib," runs this earliest example extant of a will, "king of multitudes, king of Assyria, have given chains of gold, stores of ivory, a *cap* of gold, other crowns and chains, besides riches in heaps, with crystal and other precious stones—over four hundred pounds weight—to Esarhaddon, my son, named Assur-ebil-mucin-pal, according to my wish: the treasure laid up in the temple of Amuk and Nebo-irik-erba, the *harpists* of Nebo."[1] Such a distinct sign of favour in all probability became known, and may have caused the conspiracy before which Sennacherib fell. Eighteen or nineteen years had passed since his flight from Jerusalem. Five campaigns, recorded in his Annals, had occupied his arms in the north, the south, and the east, one of them apparently as near Palestine as Edom, which he must have invaded from the desert.[2] Most of them, however, had been directed against Babylon, where the son of Merodach Baladan II. headed the long-continued struggle for independence, till he was taken alive by Sennacherib, during a battle. But Palestine had no interest in those distant struggles, and was left for the time to itself.

During the last nine years of his reign, Sennacherib lived at Nineveh, busied with the erection of a grand palace for his son Assur-munik, or Assur-mulik, probably the Adrammelech of the Book of Kings,[3] who had become heir to the throne after the death of his elder brother Assur-nadin-sum, in the year 694 before Christ.[4] The will in favour of Esarhaddon may have been later, and

[1] *Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*, vol. iii. pl. 16, No. 3. *Records of the Past*, vol. i. p. 138.

[2] Smith's *Hist. of Sennacherib*, pp. 137 ff. *The Assyrian Eponym Canon*, Extract 34, pp. 136 ff.

[3] 2 Kings xix. 37.

[4] Smith's *Assyria*, p. 125.

have roused the suspicions of his brothers that, after all, he was designed for the throne. Whatever the dark history of palace intrigues, in B.C. 681 Sennacherib lay murdered in the temple of Nebo, by his sons Adrammelech and (Nergal) Sharezer or Sar-usur,[1] the god "Nergal protect the king."

Esarhaddon seems to have been absent from Nineveh when his father was killed, but he resolved to avenge him. Collecting a numerous army, the parricides were defeated on the Upper Euphrates, and fled to Armenia, where they were allowed by the reigning prince to remain, and received a grant of territory, in which they and their descendants henceforth permanently settled.

An inscription of Esarhaddon,[2] unfortunately mutilated, lights up vividly the fierce passions of this long hushed storm.

". . . I vowed from my heart," says Esarhaddon. "My liver[3] was inflamed with rage. I immediately wrote letters saying, that I assumed the sovereignty of my Father's House, and lifted up my hands to Assur, the Moon, the Sun, Bel, Nebo, Nergal, Ishtar of Nineveh and Ishtar of Arbela, and they accepted my prayer. In their gracious favour they sent me an encouraging oracle—'Go, fear not! we march at thy side; we aid thy expedition!' (Being in winter quarters), I could not move for a day or two; the chariot horses remained tethered; the regiments in their places; the tents unstruck. Meanwhile every preparation was made for the campaign, with the utmost haste. A great snowstorm (in the moun-

[1] Instead of Nergal, the name of the god may have been Assur. See vol. iv. p. 474.

[2] Found on clay tablets at Kouyunjik. It is published in Layard's *Inscription*, plates 54–58; or *Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*, vol. iii. plates 15 and 16; and in *Records of the Past*, vol. iii. pp. 103 ff., where it is translated by H. Fox Talbot.

[3] Juvenal, "Quanta jecur ardeat ira." The ancients made the liver the seat of rage or anger.

tains), in the month of January (B.C. 680) darkened the sky and stopped the advance, but I did not give up. Then, as a bird spreads its wings, so I displayed my standards, as a signal to my allies, and took the road to Nineveh with much toil, by forced marches. Getting before my troops in the hill country, their powerful warriors attacked my advance and discharged their arrows, but the terror of the gods, who are my lords, overwhelmed them, and they retreated before the valour of my army. Ishtar, queen of war and battle, stood by my side, and broke their bows, and, in her rage, destroyed their line of battle—proclaiming herself to the enemy as an 'unsparing deity.'

"By her high favour I planted my standards (at Nineveh) where I had intended."[1]

The affairs of Babylonia now demanded the immediate attention of the new king. A son of Merodach Baladan, on the coast lands of the Persian Gulf, at the mouth of the Euphrates, formerly ruled by his father, revolted and proclaimed his independence. Having taken the city of Ur, in the north, he killed Esarhaddon's prefect, and installed himself in his place, refusing to do homage at Nineveh or "even," as Esarhaddon says, "to enquire after the health of my majesty." An army launched against the "rebel" was, however, enough to send him in full flight to the king of Elam, in the mountains; the hereditary foe of Assyria. But the Elamite king was anxious at the time to keep on good terms with Esarhaddon, and put to death the unfortunate suppliant for shelter. On this, another son of Merodach Baladan, then also in Elam, feeling no longer safe there, recrossed the frontier, threw himself at Esarhaddon's feet, and was not only pardoned, but had his brother's territories restored to him.

Babylon next engaged the attention of the Great King. Going thither himself, he commenced the restoration of the city, which had remained almost a ruin, since its capture

[1] The rest of the column is unfortunately broken off.

by Sennacherib in B.C. 691. The walls were restored; the temples, including that of Bel, rebuilt; and the gods which his father had carried off to Nineveh, brought back. The plunder taken from the different cities of Babylonia was, also, as far as possible, returned to their inhabitants, to propitiate them. Under such fatherly government Babylon soon became once more a great city, the rival of Nineveh, and even, hereafter, little as Esarhaddon dreamed it, its conqueror. Petty kings and chiefs on its former territory were duly crushed; one of them being burned alive as an example; and such terror of Esarhaddon's arms inspired, that he henceforth reigned in peace over Babylon, till his death in B.C. 668.[1]

From the Euphrates, the Great King next marched his armies to Palestine, whose princes, headed by Abdimulkuth, king of Sidon, in all probability at the instigation of Egypt, had refused to pay tribute. But his resistance was short, for the rebellious city was at once invested, and soon fell.

"Conqueror of the city of Sidon on the sea," says the record, "sweeper away of all its villages, I rooted up and destroyed its citadel and palace, and threw them into the ocean. Having caught its king, who had fled from my arms like a fish, into the middle of the sea, I cut off his head, and that of another chief, and sent them as a trophy to hang up over the great gate of Nineveh. His treasure, his goods, his gold, silver, and precious stones, with skins and teeth of elephants, costly woods, purple and yellow cloths of every description, and his regalia, I carried off. Men and women without number; countless sheep, oxen and asses, I swept off to Assyria."[2]

[1] Smith's *Babylonia*, pp. 129 ff. Smith's *Assyria*, pp. 139 ff.

[2] *Annals of Esarhaddon, Records of the Past*, vol. iii. p. 111. Smith's *Assyria*, p. 129.

Demolishing Sidon, he crowned his triumph by building a new town on its site, with the name of the "City of Esarhaddon," transferring to it the population of the destroyed city, whom he placed under an Assyrian general. He hoped thus to retain the trade of Sidon, but it passed to the great Phenician metropolis, Tyre.

A grand durbar of all the princes of Palestine and Cyprus was now summoned, to do homage to the conqueror, and in terror at his victory, twenty-two of them attended. Among these came Manasseh, glad once more to pay tribute. Baal, king of Tyre; the kings of Edom, Moab, Gaza, Askelon, Ekron, Gebal, Arvad, Beth-ammon, and Ashdod, also presented themselves, with Abibaal, king of Samaria, the last known bearer of the title.[1] Chiefs from Cyprus, moreover, with Greek names and ruling over Greek settlements—Pythagoras, king of Citium; the kings of Salamis, Paphos, Idalium, and Aphrodisium, with others, swelled the glory of the Assyrian.[2] But they had to pay for the honour of waiting upon him, and for their past offences. Esarhaddon was at the time building a new palace in Nineveh, and contributions of materials for it were exacted from them.[3] "Great beams and rafters of cedar, cypress, and other

[1] *The Assyrian Eponym Canon*, Ext. 37, p. 139, line 17. Smith adds, that in the year 645, under Assurbanipal, Esarhaddon's successor, an Assyrian governor ruled at Samaria (p. 128, as above). This would illustrate Isaiah's words (chap. vii. 8: see vol. iv. p. 308), "Within sixty-five years Ephraim shall be broken as a nation." The governor very probably was appointed much earlier than 645, as Assurbanipal was joint king of Nineveh as early as 669.

[2] The name of the king of Paphos was Itudagon, "Dagon is with him."

[3] *Keilinschriften*, p. 244. *Records of the Past*, vol. iii. pp. 111 ff. Menant, *Annales*, n. 241.

woods, from the mountains of Lebanon and Sirar;[1] statues of the gods; bas reliefs; blocks of stone, of various kinds; slabs of alabaster, they forwarded to Nineveh."

It was now the year B.C. 676,[2] and after attacking and taking Arza, on the small stream called the River of Egypt, at the southern boundary of Palestine—Esarhaddon returned to Nineveh. His last feat had shown his feeling towards the Pharaohs, whom he thus insulted, without, for the time, being able to injure them more seriously. Captives sent from the East replaced the populations he had carried off from central Palestine; including in all probability not a few from Judah, and some of the remnant of the Ten Tribes who had hitherto been left in their own land. Their fate in Assyria is recorded by the Great King himself.

"I caused crowds of them to work in fetters, making bricks. I pulled down the whole of the small palace, and caused much earth to be brought away in baskets from the fields, and threw it on the site of my new palace, and completed the mound on which it was to stand, with stones of great size."[3] "With captives, young and old, male and female, I marched to the gate of Nineveh, and left them to stay in front of it for ever, with dogs and other beasts."[4] In the place of these unfortunates came motley crowds brought from the scenes of Esarhaddon's eastern campaigns;[5] Babylonians and people of Erech, Susiana, Elam, and southern Persia; thus adding largely to the heathen element formerly

[1] Either the range of Antilebanon or Mount Hermon. *Wo lag das Paradies*, p. 104.
[2] Assyrian Canon, in *Keilinschriften*, p. 321.
[3] *Annals of Esarhaddon*, col. 5.
[4] *Annals*, col. 2.
[5] Ezra iv. 2, 10.

sent by Sargon from almost the same regions,[1] and degrading still further the blood of the future Samaritans.[2]

The Annals for the next few years record various expeditions. The irruption of wandering tribes from beyond the Caucasus—to become so dangerous hereafter—had already begun, but Esarhaddon, crossing the mountains east of Nineveh, met and drove back their hordes, which then turned to the west and overran part of Asia Minor—the first wave of the fierce swarms which, from time to time, alarmed the world for the next eighteen hundred years. Cilicia and its neighbourhood, in Asia Minor, now felt the scourge of the Assyrian armies. There, the Great King "trampled on the heads" of the rough mountaineers, who had hitherto been unsubdued; burning twenty-one of their larger and smaller towns; slaying multitudes of the inhabitants, and imposing heavy tribute on the survivors.[3] The "enemies and heretics" of Telassar,[4] south-east of Assyria, in the mountains—were then assailed and crushed, and part of the wild hill country of the Medes, till now uninvaded by Assyria, was harried and laid waste. "Chiefs of fortresses and their men, horses and chariots, oxen and sheep, mules and Bactrian camels, and mighty spoil," were carried off to Nineveh.

The distant Arabian peninsula was the scene of another campaign. Hitherto the distance, the intervening deserts, and the parched and burning plains of Arabia itself, had

[1] See vol. iv. pp. 241 ff.

[2] Lenormant, *Lettres Assyriologigues*, vol. i. p. 64.

[3] *Annals*, col. 2.

[4] 2 Kings xix. 12; Isa. xxxvii. 12; Telassur=The Hill of Assur. Perhaps in Babylonia. But its position is doubtful. *Keilinschriften*, p. 203. Delitzsch, Fried., *Wo lag das Paradies*, p. 265.

prevented any serious efforts to subdue it. For nearly two hundred years the Assyrian territories had bordered those of outlying Arab tribes, and Tiglath-pileser, Sargon, and Sennacherib had ravaged the districts near Edom, but they had not attempted to march far into Arabia. Hazael, king of Edom, now, however, appeared in Nineveh, imploring that the gods of his nation, taken away by Sennacherib, might be restored, and offering to pay a heavy tribute for the favour. In a gracious mood, Esarhaddon readily granted the request, though not till he had caused an inscription in his own honour, and in that of the god Assur, to be engraved on the idols. He gave a maiden of the palace, moreover, to Hazael, to be his queen, and sent her and the gods back to Edom. He did not forget, however, to impose a tribute of sixty-five camels, in addition to that which had been paid to Sennacherib. But still heavier imposts having been levied on Hazael's son, at his father's death—ten mana (over twenty-seven pounds weight troy[1]) of gold, 1,000 precious stones, fifty camels, and other items, in addition to the previous burdens—the oppressed country refused payment, and a great invasion followed, to enforce it; the Assyrian troops marching as far as Hazu and Bazu, perhaps the Uz and Buz of Scripture, a distance of 700 or even 900 miles from Nineveh.[2]

"I left behind me," says the king, "Bazu, a land very remote; exceedingly arid, the very home of famine—140 kasbu of ground, rocky, broken, strewn with sharp stones, wild, burning with heat, and full of scorpions, like the desert. I marched where no king before me had ever gone." "Eight sovereigns—two of them reigning

[1] Sayce, in *Records of the Past*, vol. i. p. 168.

[2] 100 or 140 *kasbu*. See *Records of the Past*, vol. iii. p. 116. Smith's *Assyria*, p. 132. A kasbu was about 7 miles.

queens[1]—I put to death. The bodies of their soldiers I flung away like so much clay. Their gods, their wealth, their treasure, and their people, I carried off to Assyria. I swept away their followers like a field of corn."[2] Submissions, restorations of gods, additional slaughters, and other features of Assyrian warfare, followed, till Esarhaddon, tired of Arabian exploits, sought other regions in which to play the royal beast of prey.

Egypt had for two centuries disputed with Assyria the monarchy of the world, and had stirred up constant revolts in Palestine, causing ceaseless trouble. Sennacherib had defeated Tirhakah, the supreme king on the Nile, but the disaster to his host had afterwards forced him to an ignominious retreat. But in B.C. 672, Tirhakah again succeeded in persuading Baal, king of Tyre, a highly favoured vassal of Esarhaddon, to throw off the Assyrian yoke; hoping, no doubt, to draw most of the princes of Palestine into the movement. To defeat this combination, the Great King set forth at once for the sea coast. Tyre was now at the height of its prosperity—in part through the recent destruction of Sidon—and having the command of the Mediterranean by its fleet, felt that it could not be taken while Egypt was its ally. It therefore boldly defied the Assyrians, who could only invest it on the land side. Furious at being thus balked, Esarhaddon resolved to invade and conquer Egypt itself. Marching along the sea coast, and across the desert, amidst the greatest privations for want of water, he at last met the enemy, near Ascalon, in the Philistine country, and overcame him. Pressing on, other defeats in Egyptian territory forced Tirhakah to flee to his old capital, Nopatu, in Ethiopia.[3] Memphis now

[1] Like the Queen of Sheba.

[2] *Annals*, 1st inscription, col. 2; 2nd inscription, col. 3.

[3] Smith, *The Assyrian Eponym Canon*, Ext. 39, p. 141.

fell into the hands of the conqueror and Tirhakah's empire was for a time overthrown. He had crushed the Egyptian dynasty of Memphis, and the Ethiopian monarch who reigned feebly at Thebes, and had raised his mother to the dignity of "Mistress of Upper and Lower Egypt and of all the nations." But, now, Memphis became the capital of the invader, and Thebes, to which the Assyrian sailed, up the river, was taken by him and given over to plunder. The statues of the gods and goddesses, the golden decorations of the priests and priestesses, and all the splendid equipments of the temples, were sent to Nineveh, as a trophy, to the gods of Assyria. The whole country was then broken up into twenty districts, each with its own king—Necho, of Sais, being raised over all, as their chief, with Memphis for his capital; an anticipation of the Mameluke system, at the close of last century, when twenty-four beys held the whole kingdom, and met from time to time, under a president, at Cairo. Assyrian garrisons and prefects completed the new scheme of government.[1] Egypt had at last been humbled. The affront offered to Nineveh, centuries before, by the invasions of Thothmes III. and Amenhotep II. had been avenged, and the words of Isaiah, spoken in the reign of Hezekiah, had had their first fulfilment.

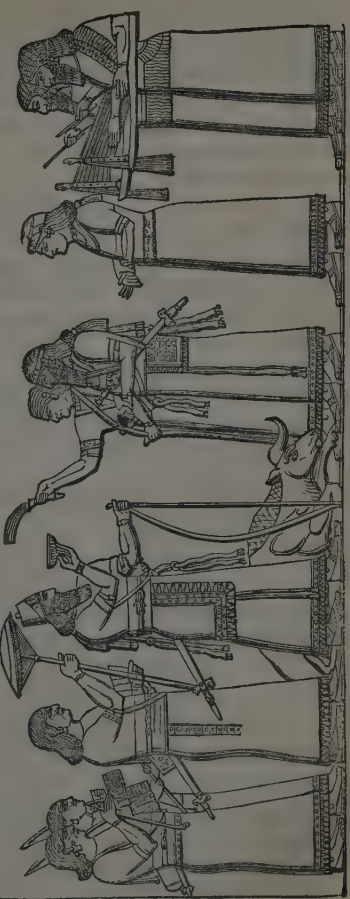
I will stir up Egyptians against Egyptians; brother shall fight against brother, city against city, and kingdom against kingdom.[2] And I shall give up Egypt to the hands of a hard master, and a fierce king shall reign over it, says the Lord, Jehovah of hosts.[3]

[1] Maspero, *Histoire Ancienne des peuples de l'Orient*, 2nd ed. pp. 427–8.

[2] Necho fought for Assyria against the Egyptian army of Tirhakah. That king is painted red on the monuments, not black; his queen, at his side, pours out water to the ram-headed god Amen-Ra, and plays on the sistrum. *Trans. Bib. Arch.*, vol. vii. pp. 193–207.

[3] **Is. xix. 2.**

Having thus crushed the one rival of his power, Esarhaddon returned to Nineveh, leaving behind him on the rocks of the Dog River of Phenicia, by the side of the triumphal tablets of Rameses II., an inscription, recounting his own victories, and proclaiming himself king of Egypt, Thebes and Ethiopia.[2] Satiated



THE ASSYRIAN KING REFRESHING HIMSELF AFTER A HUNT.[1]

[1] The royal umbrella is held over his head by a eunuch. A wild bull, just shot down, or taken, lies at his feet. The beardless figures are eunuchs. The one in front has a fly flap, to protect the king from annoyance.

[2] Oppert, *Mémoire sur les Monuments de l'Egypt et de l'Assyrie*, pp. 38–43, 80 ff. E. de Rougé, *Étude sur les Monuments de Tharaka; Mélanges d'Archéologie égyptienne et assyrienne*, Nov. 1872, p. 16.

with glory, he henceforth devoted himself to the gentler ambition of finishing his new palace, which he made even more magnificent than that built by his father Sennacherib; its vast aggregate of courts and halls covering more than 100 acres. The roofs were supported by beams of cedar, resting on columns of cypress, inlaid and strengthened by bands of sculptured silver and iron; its gates were guarded by huge lions and bulls sculptured in stone; its doors were of ebony and cypress encrusted with iron, silver, and ivory. Anxious, moreover, to propitiate the gods, now that his life was ebbing, he built throughout the country no fewer than thirty-six temples "covered with plates of gold and silver, and glittering like the sun."[1] But his day was well nigh over. In B.C. 669 his health gave way, and after pining for a time amidst the splendour, he retired to Babylon,[2] where he died in the next year, B.C. 668.

[1] G. Smith, *Zeitschrift, etc.*, 1868, pp. 94, 95.
[2] *Maspero*, p. 428.

*Note on Tirhakah*, from Paper of Dr. Birch, quoted p. 76.—His sister, like himself, is not black, but red, on the monuments, as if the Ethiopian dynasty had been of Egyptian descent. The great rock temple of Bessa seems to have been built by him. It shows him offering incense to the god Anher, and truth to the god Amen-Ra and to Mut. He wears ram's horns, like Alexander the Great, and like his predecessors Sabaco and Ramses II.; a claim to be the son of Amen-Ra—the ram-headed god. A small oval of terra-cotta, found at Palmyra, has the name of Tirhakah on it. Did his conquests extend so far? On a monument at Thebes he is represented as conquering the Assyrians. He grasps the hair of ten Asiatic prisoners, who stand bearded and holding daggers, while he is about to strike them with his battle mace.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE LATER YEARS OF MANASSEH.

AFTER Esarhaddon's return from Egypt, he resolved to preclude such troubles respecting the succession as had darkened the opening of his own reign, by associating with himself, in the government, his eldest son, Assurbanipal, the Sardanapalus of the Greeks, afterwards the greatest of the Assyrian kings. An assembly of the nation was therefore called at Nineveh, and the young heir publicly elevated to a share of the throne, on the 12th of the month Iyyar, almost our April,[1] B.C. 670 or 669. Like Sapor in after-times, he had been named king before his birth, and the ceremony of his installation was accompanied with extraordinary pomp.

Meanwhile bad news arrived from Egypt. Esarhaddon had scarcely left it before Tirhakah once more seized Thebes and Memphis, which fell after a bloody siege;[2] the kings and governors so lately appointed, fleeing before him to the desert. The adherents of Assyria, moreover, had been banished from the country. The reconquest of the Nile was necessary, and Assurbanipal

[1] Sayce, *Records of the Past*, vol. i. p. 166. Smith's *Assyria*, p. 137. *Records of the Past*, vol. i. p. 59.

[2] Oppert, *Les Sargonides*, p. 57.

at once undertook it. Twenty-two kings of Palestine and Cyprus, he tells us, gathered, to pay their tribute to him, when he reached the Mediterranean coast; Manasseh among them.[1] Under his father, Tyre had been invested on the land side by an Assyrian army, but its king now submitted to pay tribute, and operations against him ceased. "The towers I had raised, I pulled down," says the Great King; "on sea and land all his roads that I had taken I opened, and I received his abundant tribute."[2] Collecting the contingents of the Syrian and Palestine vassals, he now pressed on, by the coast road, to Egypt, and having defeated the army sent to check his advance, forced Tirhakah to evacuate, first Memphis, and then Thebes, where the Assyrians remained for some time. The petty kings having joined them, and furnished a fleet of boats, the ascent of the river Nile was accomplished in forty days. The old arrangements of Esarhaddon were forthwith restored; twenty vassal kings were set once more over as many districts, but heavier tribute than before was imposed, and stronger garrisons placed in the different cities, to keep Tirhakah from invading the land again from the south.

Hardly had the Great King returned to Nineveh, however, before a revolt broke out on the Nile. The petty rulers, galled by the Assyrian yoke, sent emissaries, inviting Tirhakah to come back, and undertaking to re-establish him on the throne of the Pharaohs, if he left them undisturbed in their principalities. Of this league, Necho, the chief of the kings appointed by Esarhaddon, was the soul. The capture of a messenger sent to Tirhakah, however, revealed the conspiracy before it was

[1] The title "King of Judah," remains; the king's name is lost, but it must have been Manasseh.

[2] *Annals of Assurbanipal, Records of the Past*, vol. ix. p. 40.

ripe, and Necho, with one of the kings, were seized and sent in chains to Nineveh.

"My generals," says Assurbanipal, "heard of the plot, and having captured their messengers and dispatches, saw their seditious work. These kings they took and bound their hands and feet in bonds and fetters of iron, and sent them to Nineveh." But the revolt broke out notwithstanding. Lower Egypt was determined, if possible, to expel the foreigner. Yet the Assyrian generals speedily quelled the rising, throwing down the walls of the rebellious cities, and killing great numbers of their inhabitants. Meanwhile Tirhakah again entered Egypt, defeated the Assyrians in the upper province, and retook Thebes. Assurbanipal, however, checked the invader by an unexpected step. Instead of putting Necho to death, he restored him to favour, "as the representative of the old royal family of Egypt." "Costly garments," he tells us, "I put on him, and ornaments of gold; his royal image I made for him; rings of gold I fastened on his feet; a sword of steel in a gold sheath I gave him, with more, besides, than I could write, for the glory of my name." Thus loaded with honours, he was sent back to Egypt, in company with a staff of military men and officials, and under stricter conditions of vassalage than before. Paralysed by this step, and, it is said, warned in a dream,[1] Tirhakah gave up the contest and returned to Ethiopia, where he soon after died.[2]

But a new and vigorous leader at once took the place of the brave Ethiopian; Nud-Ammon, a son of Tirhakah's sister and of a former Egyptian king, Sabako. Having

[1] *Herod.*, ii. 152. The name Sabako has been substituted for Tirhakah.

[2] Assurbanipal says, "he went to his place of night."

retaken Thebes, he pushed on to Memphis, and took it after a long siege, in which Necho fell into his hands and was put to death; Psammetichus, his son, one of the petty kings, only saving his life by flight to Syria.[1] Egypt was once more delivered from the Assyrian.

Assurbanipal was thus forced to undertake a second great expedition to the Nile; but his mere presence was enough to scare away Nud-Ammon from Memphis, and make it open its gates once more to the invader. The kings, prefects, and governors, set up by Assyria, dissembling their late treason, returned and renewed their submission. The tide of conquest then rolled on towards the south. Thebes had too readily yielded to the Ethiopian, and now bore the full vengeance of the monarch it had betrayed. Abandoned by Nud-Ammon, as Memphis had been, it could offer no resistance, and was ruthlessly plundered.

"My hands," says the Great King, "took the whole of it; silver, gold, precious stones, the furniture of the palace, all there was; garments costly and beautiful, noble houses, two lofty obelisks covered with carving, 2,500 talents[2] in weight, I carried off to Nineveh."[3] The spoil was immense. The city was swept as if by a flood.[4] Nahum, the prophet, who wrote a little later, pictures the completeness of its destruction. Addressing Nineveh, he says: "Art thou better than No-Ammon,[5] that was enthroned amidst the canals of the Nile, surrounded by waters, whose walls and bulwarks were broad sea-like streams? Cush and the two Egypts were

[1] *Maspero*, p. 430.
[2] About 70 tons.
[3] *Annals of Assurbanipal*, col. ii.
[4] Oppert. *Memoire, etc.*
[5] Thebes No-Ammon, the seat or city belonging to the sun-god Ammon. *Mühlau und Volck.* So also the Sept.

her exhaustless strength; Put and Lybia were her allies. But she has gone away captive into exile; her young children were dashed in pieces at every corner of her streets; they cast lots for her nobles, who would have them as menial slaves; all her great citizens were carried off bound in chains."[1] The destruction of Thebes took place about the year B.C. 660,[2] towards the middle of the reign of Manasseh.

War was now to come even nearer Judah. Tyre had again been refractory, and was once more besieged. "Baal, king of Tyre," says the record, "had disregarded my royal will, and would not hear the words of my lips. I raised towers round him on sea and land, seized his roads, and forced him to submit to my yoke." The water of the city had been cut off, and this compelled a surrender. Its king had trusted to help from Egypt, but that kingdom was now powerless. Yahimelek, the heir apparent, Baal's own daughter, and the daughters of his brothers, with large sums of money, were sent out to the camp of Assurbanipal, and put in his hands. The prince he restored; the princesses he sent to his harem. Other kings, including, no doubt, Manasseh, now hastened to submit to the conqueror, most of them seeking, like the king of Tyre, to propitiate him by giving one of their daughters to him as a concubine; themselves humbly kissing his feet.

The glory of a king thus uniformly victorious spread through all lands. The king of Tubal, in Armenia, sent him one of his daughters, and voluntarily paid a tribute of horses; the king of Cilicia, in Asia Minor, also sent a daughter. Envoys from Gyges, the king of Lydia, in the south-west of Asia Minor, tendered their master's homage; but, as it proved, this friendliness was short-

[1] Nahum iii. 8-10. [2] See Isaiah.

lived. Ere long, Gyges was an ally of Egypt against Assyria.

The pacification of the Nile valley was only momentary. Psammetichus, the son of Necho, and now head of the old Egyptian royal family, impatient of an inferior position, resolved to crush the petty princes around him, who were now reduced to twelve in number; and was able to secure a contingent of Greeks—chiefly Carians and Ionians, from Gyges—to aid his native force. The Lydian king had noticed the constant disturbances in the Assyrian provinces, and feeling assured that Egypt could not be permanently held, at such a distance from Nineveh, threw his influence into the scale against it. With such assistance, the Assyrian garrisons were soon expelled, never again to enter the Nile valley. Psammetichus ascended the throne on the 14th February, B.C. 664,[1] while Manasseh had still twenty-four years to reign. Henceforth Greek mercenaries played a prominent part in the history of Egypt. It had lost its foreign conquests, but Psammetichus energetically strove to put it into a secure state of defence on all its frontiers. Palestine was apparently left undisturbed, except by a tedious siege, or rather investment, carried on against Ashdod or Azotus, for twenty-nine years. But his long reign marks a renewed vigour, which was afterwards to have great results. Architecture, literature, and the arts, were nobly encouraged, for even Egypt was beginning to feel the influence of foreign nations; thanks to the fondness of Psammetichus for the Greeks. The introduction of a new form of handwriting—the demotic or popular—instead of the cumbrous hieroglyphics, and

[1] Eber's *Aeg. Königstochter*, vol. i. p. 211. Brugsch says, B.C. 666. *History*, vol. ii. p. 277.

of the hieratic, or sacred hand, of the past, was only a sign of the new life astir in all directions.

It would be of little use to follow in detail the story of Assurbanipal's later campaigns, after his capture of Tyre. He might almost have claimed the honour of being the chief desolator that had hitherto afflicted the nations. His annals breathe only a ferocious ambition to be the lord of the world, at any cost to mankind. In Minni, a region bordering on Armenia, he tells us, "he threw down, destroyed, and burnt towns without number; and carried off people, horses, asses, oxen, and sheep, as spoil. The country, he laid waste along fifteen days' march, and to crown all, its king was killed by his own attendants, as the Assyrians approached, and his corpse torn in pieces; his brothers, his relatives, and all his connections being also murdered.

The Scythians of Gog,[1] the name given to a part of the wild north-eastern steppes of Central Asia, next suffered. Kiepert assigns them the tracts north of the Hindoo Kusch, now part of Turkestan,[2] where they were known as the Saka. To reach them, if this localization of their haunts be right, was a gigantic task, for they lived at a distance of nearly 2,000 miles north-east of Nineveh; far beyond the utmost point on the broad prairies of Southern Siberia, which, after decades of effort, Russia has succeeded in reaching. From the remote north the flames of war rolled to the plains and mountains of Elam, east of the Tigris, at its entrance into the Persian Gulf. The whole land, we are told, was "overwhelmed with the shock of the terrible storm," the king beheaded, fighting men without number slain, and the waters of the Ulai[3] choked with their corpses.

[1] Ezek. xxxviii. 39.

[2] *Atlas Antiquus*, Map ii.

[3] Dan. viii. 2. The Eulæus. It flows past Susa in Persia, and

Teumann the king, it appears, had resolved to invade Assyria. But, says Assurbanipal,—

"I prayed to the lofty Istar . . and she came to save me. I said, 'Goddess of Arbela, I am Assurbanipal, king of Assyria, the work of thy hands. I delight in thy courts.[1] Teumann, king of Elam, hater of the gods, has gathered his army, and prepared for war. He orders his soldiers to go to Assyria. O thou Archer of the gods, throw him down, and crush him like a weight in the midst of the battle, tear . . . '

"My acceptable prayer Istar heard. 'Fear not,' said she, and caused my heart to rejoice. 'At the lifting up of thy hand thine eyes shall be satisfied with my judgments on thine enemies. I will grant thee favour.'

"Moreover, in the dead of the very night when I thus invoked her, a seer, while asleep, dreamed, and, behold, Istar spoke to him, and he repeated it to me. She entered, surrounded with glory, holding a bow in her hand; its mighty arrow on the string, and her countenance set. Then she spoke. 'Carry off the spoil. I will come to the place set before thee. I will go with thee. I will guard thee. I will rest in my place in the temple of Nebo, eating food, drinking wine, enjoying music, and glorifying my divinity till I go with thee. I will cause thee to have the desire of thy heart.'[2] Do not regard thy life. In the midst of battle she, of her loving goodness, protects thee, and overthrows all who resist."

The victory that followed was, of course, attributed to the favour of the goddess. Leaving the desolated country, Assurbanipal turned against the king of Gambulu, one of the allies of the king of Elam, on the marshes of the lower Euphrates,[3] and swept it "like a hailstorm." Dimann the king, his brothers, his wife,

falls into the united Tigris and Euphrates. The present Karun. A river of ancient Elam. *Mühlau u. Volck*, and *Wo lag das Paradies*, p. 329.

[1] See Ps. lxxxiv. 10.

[2] Ps. xxxvii. 4.

[3] *Wo lag das Paradies*, p. 240.

sons, daughters, concubines, singing men and singing women, he took alive, and sacked the palace. The head of Teumann was hung round the neck of Dimann, and the Assyrian army returned to Nineveh, amidst great rejoicings, "with the conquests of Elam and the spoils of Gambulu, musicians making music." The great men of both countries were then brought before Assurbanipal; the head of Teumann having meanwhile been fixed over the great front gate of Nineveh. One of the Elamite nobles, happier than the rest, was able to kill himself with his own sword. The tongue of Dimann and of other chief captives was torn out, and they were then skinned, while yet alive, except Dimann, who was roasted to death over a furnace. His unfortunate brothers were also put to death, and, after being quartered, the pieces were sent to different places. Other prisoners of name were crushed to death before the great gate "in the midst of Nineveh," by their own attendants, who were forced to perform the hideous task. Such were the ideas of a triumph then; but war and victory are very little better in any age. They are, at all times, the sum of all villanies!

During the years in which these ceaseless campaigns were drenching wide regions with blood, Manasseh was reigning in Judah, and bitter persecution of the worshippers of Jehovah still continued. He was at last, however, to feel that the vengeance of God may overtake the sinner, even in this life.

Assurbanipal had appointed his younger brother Saul-mugina to be king of Babylon,[1] but only as a subordinate, required to address his superior at Nineveh as "the king, my lord." But such a position did not satisfy him, and

[1] He had, in fact, been appointed by his father, Esarhaddon, but Assurbanipal confirmed the appointment.

he aspired to independence. In the wars with Elam and Gambulu he had supplied soldiers to the enemy, and he had also sent emissaries to form a league against Assurbanipal among all the nations from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean; as Merodach Baladan had done in the reign of Hezekiah. "The people of Akkad, Chaldea, Aram,[1] and the sea coast" on the west, and "from the Red Sea to the Persian Gulf" on the south, "tributaries dependent on me," says the Great King, "he caused to revolt against my hand." "The kings of the Goim, of Syria, and of Ethiopia, he caused to rebel, and they set their faces with him." A great crisis had risen. The whole empire was agitated. Egypt had been already lost by the triumph of Psammetichus. The sovereignty of the world now threatened to pass to Saulmugina, at Babylon.

But Assurbanipal was equal to the emergency. At the head of an army he crushed the revolters in one direction, while different hosts, under his generals, defeated and humbled them in others. Arabia was invaded, and "swept bare as by a desolating flood." "Tents, pavilions, dwellings," were given to the flames. Oxen, sheep, asses, camels, and men were carried off in such numbers, that a camel was sold in front of the gate of Nineveh for half a silver shekel, and slaves were correspondingly without value. The few who escaped the invaders were reduced to such misery that they were forced to eat the flesh of their children. Ammuladin, king of Kedar, in Northern Arabia, was defeated by the king of Moab, a vassal of Nineveh who remained faithful, and sent to Nineveh with iron chains on his hands and feet.[2] Sipparu, Babylon, Borsippa and other cities,

[1] Syria in the widest sense.

[2] Smith's *Annals of Assurbanipal*, col. viii. lines 43, 44.

had been fortified by Saulmugina, and were now besieged and taken by his royal brother. Elam rose to help the great revolt, but it, also, was crushed, in a battle which the Great King led in person. Akkad was made so utter a wilderness that, as in Arabia, the survivors betook themselves to cannibalism to preserve life.[1] At last, after a tremendous struggle over widely separate regions, Saulmugina was taken alive, and the rebellion collapsed.

The time for vengeance had now come. Saulmugina himself was thrown by his brother into a "fierce burning fire." The tongues of great numbers of men were pulled out, and multitudes were thrown alive among the "stone lions and bulls" in "a pit," or quarry; the fall from a height apparently being counted upon to kill them. But, whether living or dead, their "limbs were cut off," and thrown to "the dogs, bears, eagles, vultures, birds of heaven, and fishes of the deep; till they grew fat on them." The great men of Babylon, Kutha, and Sipparu, who had aided the rebellion, were made slaves.

A Prisoner Manacled and Fettered.

Among those who had listened to the overtures of Saulmugina, Manasseh seems to have compromised himself, as one of the kings of the "sea coast." The Assyrian general in Palestine, therefore, having got him, by some means, into his power, sent him like the other rebel princes, in chains, to Nineveh, for judgment. He seems, indeed, for some special reason, to have been treated with exceptional sternness. His feet were bound with fetters; his hands with manacles, and a ring, to which a cord was attached, was

[1] Smith's *Annals of Assurbanipal*, col. iv. lines 100, 101.

passed through his lips or nostril, to lead him by it, as men led a wild beast.[1] Isaiah had told Hezekiah that Jehovah would put His hook in the nose of Sennacherib, and His bridle in his lips, and turn him back by the way he had come,[2] and Ezekiel, hereafter, was to tell the Pharaoh that he would have hooks put in his jaws, as was done with the huge crocodile of his own canals;[3] and to denounce other princes in the same terms.[4] This contemptuous torture now fell on one who had been as bitter an enemy to Jehovah, as any of the heathen, and in this plight he was led off with a multitude of captives to the East; his special place of captivity being Babylon.[5]

Manasseh's captivity is not mentioned in Kings, and the narrative in Chronicles has been often assailed on the assumed ground that Assyria had no such position in Western Asia at this time as the narrative implies. It has been urged, moreover, that Manasseh could not have been led, as stated, to Babylon, but to Nineveh.[6] The inscriptions, however, strikingly vindicate the Bible statement, and show the worthlessness, in this instance at least, of the "higher criticism." The extract already given from the Annals of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal

[1] This is the meaning given by Fürst and by Mühlau and Volck, the latest authorities, to the word ḥoaḥ, translated in our version "among the thorns." 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11. The ḥoaḥ was a ring or hook passed through the nose of large fishes when they were put into the water again, to be kept till needed. Job xli. 2, where "thorn" (ḥoaḥ) = ring or hook. The meaning, "thorns," which is correct in some passages, came from their hook-like form and sharpness, as our word "thorn" comes from a root, meaning "that which pierces."

[2] 2 Kings xix. 28. Isa. xxxvii. 29. [3] Ezek. xxix. 4.

[4] Ezek. xxxviii. 4. [5] 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11.

[6] See Graf's article on the subject, in *Studien und Kritiken*, for 1859. That such an ultra-rationalist should in this instance defend Scripture, is noteworthy.

show that all Syria and Egypt were, for a length of time, tributary to them—Manasseh, among other kings, being expressly named as their vassal.[1] That the Egyptian leanings of the Jewish king, shown so strikingly in the name of Amon, given to his son, should have led him to plot against Assyria, is probable. In the figurative language of the prophet, he had gone "in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of the Nile."[2] The intrigues of Saulmugina, coming after the loss of Egypt to Assyria, by the successful revolt of Psammetichus, would find the Jewish king, like other princes of Syria and the sea coast, ready to listen to them, as his father had listened to those of Merodach Baladan, from the same region. Nineveh was undoubtedly the special residence of the Great King, but both Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal were also kings of Babylon.[3] They both, therefore, at times resided in that city, and there received ambassadors or judged vassal princes, accused, like Manasseh, of disloyalty. There is, therefore, nothing unhistorical in naming Babylon as the place to which the Jewish king was taken.

The rebellion of Saulmugina fixes the year B.C. 648 as the date of Manasseh's defection; his deportation to Babylon following on the year after.[4] He had now reigned

[1] A list of princes of Palestine tributary to Assurbanipal has been discovered, naming the "king of Judah" as one. This must have been Manasseh, though the name, unfortunately, is broken off. *Keilinschriften*, p. 230.

[2] Jer. ii. 18. Sihor (black, muddy) = Nile.

[3] *Keilinschriften*, p. 233, note.

[4] See *Keilinschriften*, pp. 240 ff. for a vindication of the historical character of the passage in Chronicles respecting Manasseh's captivity. How weighty the fact that a critic so keen as Schrader should defend an incident which had been long relied upon by the advanced school, as a striking instance of the *unhistorical*

about forty-seven years and was nearly sixty years old; with no prospect before him, as it seemed, but a violent and shameful death. How he was at first treated is unknown, but he must have been for a time kept in misery and degradation, if we may judge from his subsequent history. The gods he had trusted in Jerusalem had been helpless to save him, while Jehovah, whom he had insulted, had delivered his father from the hands of Sennacherib. Humbled to the dust, he realized, for the first time, the greatness of his sins, and "besought Jehovah, as now his own God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him." Nor was the penitence of even so great a sinner rejected. Assurbanipal had, before this, shown favour to Necho of Egypt, brought to Nineveh under similar circumstances,[1] and was induced, perhaps from the wish to defend himself, on the side of Egypt, by one who might henceforth be a useful ally, to restore Manasseh to his kingdom. "God was intreated" of the captive, says the sacred chronicler, "and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem, into his kingdom." "Then," it is added, "Manasseh knew that Jehovah is God."[2] A prayer, said to have been uttered by him in his trouble, is still extant in Greek, and is included in the apocryphal books of the German and English Churches. It may be that this composition, though thus doubtful, is a transcript of words understood to have been used by him, for it is expressly said in Chronicles[3] that his prayer was both in the "Book of the Kings of Israel," and in the collection

character of passages in that book! Also, see *Dictionary of Bible*, art. *Manasseh*; and Thenius, *Die Bücher der Könige*, on the verses.

[1] See page 81.

[2] 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13.

[3] 2 Chron. xxxiii. 18, 19.

of the words of Hozai, a famous prophet of the day.[1] The oldest trace of its existence, however, is found in the Apostolic Constitutions.[2] Fritzsche, a great authority, thinks it dates at least from before the Christian era, when so many apocryphal writings were composed by Greek-speaking Egyptian Jews.[3] Presenting as it does, however, a glimpse of ancient Jewish religious life and thought, it helps us to realize in some measure what must have been in the mind of the humbled old man in his lonely exile. Slightly amplified, for the sake of clearness, it runs thus :—

"O Lord Almighty, the God of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and of their righteous seed, who hast made heaven and earth, and all their wonders;[4] who hast chained the sea within its appointed limits, by the word of Thy command; who hast set confines to the bottomless abyss of the underworld, and sealed it up by Thine awful and glorious Name; before whom all things feel a holy fear, trembling before the sight of Thy power; for the greatness of Thy glory is overwhelming, and the indignation of Thy threatening against sinners cannot be endured; for Thou art the Lord Most High, of great compassion, long-suffering, very merciful, and repentest Thee of the evils suffered by man.

"Thou, O Lord, according to the abundance of Thy goodness, hast promised repentance and forgiveness to them that have sinned against Thee, and in the fulness of Thy mercies, hast appointed repentance to sinners, that they may be saved. Thou, therefore, O Lord, the God of the just, hast not repentance for the just; for such as Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, who have

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[1] For "the seers," 2 Chron. xxxiii. 19, read "Hozai."

[2] Bk. ii. 22. The earlier of the eight books of the so-called Apostolic Constitutions are ascribed, by different authorities, to various dates, from the end of the first century to the end of the third of our era. Apos. Const. in *Herzog*, vol. i. pp. 449 ff.

[3] *Exeg. Handbuch zu den Apok.*, vol. i. p. 158.

[4] Lit., "economy," laws, order, etc

not sinned against Thee[1]; but Thou hast appointed repentance for me, the sinner; for I have sinned above the number of the sands of the sea. My transgressions, O Lord, are multiplied; they are multiplied, and I am not worthy to gaze upon or behold the light of heaven—Thy dwelling-place—for the multitude of my iniquities. I am bowed down by many chains of iron so that I cannot lift up my head, and there is no rest for me; for I have provoked thine anger, and done evil in Thy sight, in not doing Thy will and not keeping Thy commandments; in having set up abominations,[2] and having multiplied objects of Thine abhorrence.

"Now, therefore, I bow the knee of mine heart, imploring Thy grace. I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned, and I acknowledge my transgressions. Wherefore, I humbly beseech Thee, forgive me, O Lord; forgive me, and destroy me not utterly in my iniquities. Store not up evil against me for ever, in anger, and condemn me not to go down to the lowest depths of Sheol. For Thou art God, the God of the penitent, and in me Thou wilt show forth all Thy goodness, for Thou wilt save me, unworthy though I be, in the greatness of Thy mercy. And I will praise Thee continually, all the days of my life; for all the Powers of the heavens extol Thee, and Thine is the glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

On his return, the change in Manasseh's feelings showed itself strikingly. Persecution was at once stayed. The foreign idols he had set up in Jerusalem and even in the temple, and also their altars, were taken away; the altar of Jehovah was replaced and sacrifices offered on it, apparently by himself, while Judah was commanded to serve Jehovah alone. The high places, through the land, however, were suffered to remain, though only permitted to be used for sacrifices to Jehovah.[3] But the evil he had done had rooted itself too deeply to be easily counteracted.

This change of religious policy was accompanied with

[1] The "perfect justness" of Abraham and those like him, is an idea of later Judaism. See Luke v. 32; xv. 7, etc.

[2] Idols.

[3] 2 Chron. xxxiii. 15–17.

a healthier feeling in political affairs. The neighbouring lands, which had been more or less dependent since the days of Uzziah, had thrown off the yoke of Judah, under the weak rule that had latterly prevailed. Philistia, Edom, Moab and Ammon were not only independent, but more audacious in their bearing than ever before,[1] and henceforth maintained their freedom, except, as has been said, for a short time under Josiah. But if they could not be subdued, their inroads could at least be checked. Garrisons were therefore placed in all the fortified towns, and an outer wall built round the City of David,[2] the earlier wall of Hezekiah having been perhaps broken down; if, indeed, it had ever been finished.

Nothing, however, could obliterate the memory of the past. The very name of Manasseh continued to be abhorred, and was used instead of that of Moses, when a dishonourable one was sought to shield that of the great lawgiver.[3] He is one of the kings whom the Rabbis hold to have no part in the life to come—the others being Jeroboam and Ahab. At his death, moreover, he was buried in the garden of his own house,[4] not in the City of David, among his ancestors.

[1] Zeph. ii. 4–19. Jer. xlvii. 1; xlix. 22; xxv. 20.

[2] 2 Chron. xxxiii. 14.

[3] In Judges xviii. 30, "Manasseh" is substituted for 'Moses." See vol. ii. p. 450.

[4] *Sept.*

# CHAPTER V.

## AMON, AND THE FIRST YEARS OF JOSIAH.

| Kings of Judah. | Kings of Egypt. | Kings of Assyria. |
|---|---|---|
| Amon, B.C. 642–640. | Psammetichus I., B.C. 666–612.[2] | Assurbanipal, B.C. 668–626. |
| Josiah, B.C. 640–610.[1] | Necho II., B.C. 612–596. | The remaining kings of Nineveh are hardly known, G. Smith names two:— |
| | | Belgakireskun and Assuredilili, son of Assurbanipal.[3] B.C. 626–607. |
| | | The Saracus of the Greeks. Smith's *Assyria*, pp. 183–8. |

THE long reign of Manasseh, extending over more than half a century, had greatly demoralized the kingdom. A gross and sensual idolatry had sapped ancient morals and corrupted the whole fabric of society. The enthusiasm of a vigorous minority had effected an outward reform under Hezekiah, but this restraint had been gladly thrown off by the bulk of the people, under his son. Nations as a whole have in all ages refused to sustain for any length of time a high morality, which curtails their self-indulgence and imposes strictness of

[1] Steiner and Hitzig give the time of Josiah's reign as B.C. 642–611. *Die kl. Propheten*, p. 298.

[2] *Schrader. Geo. Smith.*

[3] Oppert gives the name as Assuredilili, or Sardanapalus II. Schrader supposes he was the only king after Assurbanipal.

life. Puritanism in its sincerity is always limited to a narrow section, and a reaction against it, when the opportunity offers, is certain.

Hezekiah seems at his death to have had several sons,[1] but we know nothing of any of them except Manasseh, whose birth, twelve years before the close of his father's reign, seems to have been hailed by him as that of the destined heir to the throne, perhaps from the special love he bore to his mother, queen Hephzibah. It is quite possible, however, that he was not the eldest, and that his brothers, born of various mothers, may have been set aside by the palace intrigues of the heathen court-party, that they might secure a child-king, in whose name the abuses they had cherished under Ahaz could be easily re-introduced.

At Manasseh's death, however, no danger of any change of public policy seemed likely. The heathen faction, including the chiefs of the kingdom, having held power and consolidated their influence for more than fifty years, could control the new king as they pleased. Amon, therefore, the late king's son, a young man of twenty-two years of age, ascended the throne peaceably. His mother, Meshullemeth, "the friend *of God*," was the daughter of an unknown father, Haruz, "the diligent," of Jotbah, "the kindly," a village of Judah.[2] Amon himself seems to have been popular;[3] but, from whatever cause, he roused the enmity of the court party. It could not be laid to his charge that he refused to comply with the established heathenism, for it is expressly said that he walked in his father's steps, and served and worshipped the idols

[1] 2 Kings xx. 18. Isa. xxxviii. 19.

[2] 2 Kings xxi. 19–26. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 21–25. Jerome says that Jotbah was in Judah.

[3] 2 Kings xxi. 24.

he had set up, "multiplying his trespasses," and showing none of the penitent humility of Manasseh's late years. It may be, however, that signs of a serious thoughtfulness, not as yet carried into outward act, alarmed the dominant faction, for within two years he was cut off by a palace conspiracy, like that by which his ancestor, king Joash, perished.[1] But the success of his murderers was short-lived. The common people[2] rose in arms, and, overpowering all opposition, seized and slew the actors in the plot. Amon was buried with due honours in the tomb built in the garden of Uzzah, where Manasseh already rested. A great public assembly of the nation[3] was then convened, at which, in accordance with ancient usage, Josiah, the dead king's son, was elected to the throne, though only eight years of age.

Under the child thus raised to the throne of David, Judah was destined to enjoy its last brief glimpse of prosperity before it finally sank into ruin.[4] His mother, Jedidah, "the beloved of God," the daughter of Adaiah, "the honoured of God," of the village of Boscath, on the rolling slopes of the Shephelah, near Lachish,[5] may, perhaps, have deserved her lofty name, and given her boy the priceless benefit of a godly mother's example and counsels. But even if, as the Gebirah, or Queen-Mother, she enjoyed the first place in the court, her position and

[1] 2 Kings xii. 20.

[2] Am-ha-aretzin. In Ezek. vii. 27 this phrase is used to distinguish the common people from the higher classes. It latterly came to mean strictly the plebeians, the mass of the people, and was used as a term of contempt.

[3] B.C. 638. Thenius gives the date as B.C. 641.

[4] 2 Kings xxii.–xxiv. 2 Chron. xxxiv.–xxxv. Jer. i.–xii. Jos., *Ant.*, X. iv. 5.

[5] Josh. xv. 39. The queen-mother's family seems to have been one of no special distinction.

that of her son must have been very difficult. A strong party like that which had so long controlled Church and State in Judah, was dangerous to oppose in an age when, as in the case of Amon, assassination might speedily follow any signs of independence. Although, therefore, Josiah, as we are told, showed a religious bias even at his accession, it was probably known only to his mother and a few faithful adherents of the discredited faith of their fathers, who still ventured to gather round her.

Things, in fact, were rapidly growing even worse than hitherto. The "princes of Judah," and the royal family in all its wide ramifications, were devoted to heathenism. New follies, introduced from different nations, were constantly coming into vogue. High places to the goat-god of Egypt or to the hairy satyrs thought to inhabit the deserts, were built at the gates of Jerusalem.[1] The Philistine rite of leaping over the threshold of holy places was copied from the temple of Dagon,[2] and the members of the royal family, the nobles, and many others ostentatiously dressed in foreign style; adopting, doubtless, its vain, idolatrous emblems and ornaments. Violence and licence prevailed. The powerful oppressed the weak, perverted justice, mocked at innocence, and sought by craft what they could not attain by force. "Jerusalem," cried Zephaniah,[3] "is rebellious, polluted, and oppressing. Her princes and judges are like roaring lions and evening wolves, who leave nothing for the morning. Her prophets are self-willed and treacherous; her priests have polluted the sanctuary and done violence to the Law."

However well disposed, therefore, Josiah might be, as a

[1] 2 Kings xxiii. 8. Geiger and Graetz read "Seirim," satyrs, or goats for "Shiarim," gates; apparently on good grounds.

[2] Zeph. i. 9. See vol. iii. p. 30.

[3] Zeph. iii. 1, 3.

child, he was helpless for a time, alike from his tender years and from the hatred around him to any reform. How dark and prejudiced, moreover, must the mind of a boy of eight—the grandson of Manasseh, and son of Amon—have been? A change, if possible in the end, could be effected only by patient waiting.

Yet, amidst the gloom, there was already a rift in the clouds. The fierce persecution of Manasseh's reign had ceased, and the scattered and hidden band of the Faithful once more gathered together, as the forlorn hope of the true religion. They might be few, but they had been tried in the fire, and glowed with earnest conviction. No disappointments could shake their trust in Jehovah. To fear Him was with them the beginning of wisdom. Patriots in the grandest sense, they believed that the salvation of their country depended on its return to Him and active obedience to His Law. The spirit of the time still shows itself in some contemporary compositions that have fortunately come down to us. The tone of a circle which embraced men like the prophets Zephaniah, Nahum, Jeremiah, and Habakkuk, must have been almost ideally lofty. Nor were these the only confessors in those evil days. The thirty-seventh Psalm, among others, has been assigned by various critics to this period.[1] Composed in a series of proverb-like sentences, the first word of every verse beginning with the successive letters of the Hebrew Alphabet, it illustrates in its artificial form a peculiarity not uncommon in the poetry of Scripture, while its contents take us back to an age when evil appeared to triumph, and only hope in God, guided men, like a star, through the darkness. It ran thus :—

[1] It is ascribed to David in the title it now bears, but neither Delitzsch nor Moll think this reliable. Hitzig and G. Baur think it was written "before Job"—that is, in Manasseh's reign.

At evil doers fret not thyself:
At the prosperity of the wicked be not thou envious.
For like the grass they shall soon be cut down,
Like the herb, now green, they shall wither away.
Be trustful in God and do good,
Enjoy the peaceful quiet home in His own land,
Which God bestows on thee, and cherish faithfulness to Him.
Delight thyself also in Jehovah:
So shall He give thee the desires of thy heart.
Give to Jehovah the care of thy way;[1]
Trust also in Him, and He will plan it for thee:
He will make thy uprightness clear as the light;
Thy innocence as the noonday beam.
Dumb in thy stillness, rest thou in Jehovah; wait patiently for Him;
Fret not thyself about those who prosper in their way;
At those who use their prosperity only to do evil.
Hold in thine anger and leave off thy wrath;
Fret not thyself; for that only leads thee to sin.
For evil doers shall be cut off;
But they who trust in Jehovah shall inherit the land.
Wait but a little while and the wicked shall be no more;
And if you seek for the place where he has been, he is no longer there.
But the meek will inherit the land,
And delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

Should[2] the wicked plot against the godly,
And gnash upon him with his teeth—
The Lord shall laugh at him,
For He sees that his day is coming.

Have[3] the wicked unsheathed the sword and bent their bow
To bring down the poor and helpless; to slay such as walk uprightly?—
Home to their own heart shall go their sword;
Their bows shall be broken!

Trifling though that may be which the righteous man has,
It is better than the riches of many wicked.

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[1] Lit., "Roll thy way on Jehovah." [2] S for Z. [3] H for Ch.

For the arms of the wicked shall be broken,
But the righteous man is upheld by Jehovah.

Jehovah keeps note of the upright;
Their inheritance will be theirs for ever.
They will not be ashamed in the evil time;
In days of famine they shall be satisfied.
Complete destruction shall come on the wicked;
The enemies of Jehovah are as the fat sheep of the pastures;
They shall vanish in smoke—ay, vanish away!
Let the wicked borrow, he cannot repay,[1]
But the upright, though gentle to debtors, can give away.
For the blessed of God shall inherit the land,
And whom He curses will be rooted out!
Meted out by Jehovah are the sure steps of such a man,
And He delighteth in his way.
If he stumble, he shall not fall utterly down,
For Jehovah holds him up by the hand.
Now old, I have once been young,
But I have never seen the godly forsaken,
Or His children begging bread;
Ever merciful, He gives and lends each day,
And his posterity is blessed.

See that thou turn from evil and do good
So shalt thou dwell in the land for ever;
For Jehovah loves the right,
And never forsakes His saints;
Evermore are they guarded by Him.
But the generation of the wicked shall be rooted out.
The upright will inherit the land,
And dwell in it for ever.

Pious lips speak ever the true Wisdom;
The tongue of the godly talketh of the Right.
The law of their God is in their heart; their steps are sure.
To[2] slay the righteous is the bad man's work;
For this he lies in wait and watches.

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[1] He is sinking from depth to depth.

[2] It should be "Ts," instead of T, but we have no such letter.

But Jehovah gives him not into his hand,
And even if he be condemned by man, *He* does not pronounce him guilty.
[1] Cleave with strong hope to Jehovah: keep His way;
So will He exalt thee to inherit the land,
And see with gladness the destruction of the wicked.

Rough, wicked men [2] have I seen, great and terrible,
Spreading themselves like a tree full of sap, in its native soil.
Yet they passed away, and, lo, they were no more,
And though I sought them, they could not be found.

Set [3] thine eyes on the just man; mark the upright;
This man of peace has a posterity after him.[4]
But evil doers shall be destroyed together:
The posterity of the wicked shall be cut off!
To Jehovah do the righteous owe their salvation from evil.
To Jehovah, their stronghold in the day of trouble!
Jehovah stands by them, and delivers them;
Delivers them from the wicked and helps them,
Because they trust in Him.

The spiritual chaos in Judah, amidst which light was slowly beginning to assert itself, was in keeping with the tumult and confusion in the great political world of Asia and Egypt. Assurbanipal still reigned at Nineveh, but his vast military efforts, succeeding those of so many of his predecessors, had gone far to exhaust his empire, and bring about its ultimate fall. His conquest of Egypt in the beginning of his reign, as we have seen, had scarcely survived his departure from the banks of the Nile. Psammetichus I., son of Nebo I., had founded a new and victorious dynasty in the land of the Pharaohs. After his

[1] Should be "K," to suit the Hebrew alphabet.
[2] It should be in the singular. The plural is used to obtain the letter R.
[3] Should be "Sh."
[4] His house is not cut off like that of the wicked.

father's violent death,[1] Psammetichus, who had been Assyrian viceroy of Athribis—one of the twenty districts into which Egypt was at that time divided—had fled to Syria, but Assurbanipal had, meanwhile, succeeded Esarhaddon, and having restored Assyrian authority on the Nile,[2] appointed Psammetichus to the dignity his father had held, though with less independent power.

But the new viceroy was not a man to remain willingly subordinate. His triumph, by the help of Greek mercenaries, over the mob of petty vassal kings around him, has already been told. He now took a step which secured not only his supremacy, but the stability of his House. Marrying the heiress of the dethroned Ethiopian dynasty, he united its rival claims and those of the native Egyptian House, as our Henry VI. closed the strife between the Red and White Roses by his marriage with Elizabeth of York. Henceforth he was the legitimate king of Upper and Lower Egypt, and soon felt himself strong enough to rise against the Assyrian garrisons, which he ere long expelled,[3] remaining master of the whole country, from the First Cataract to the Mediterranean, and founding the Saite line of kings—the last of the great national dynasties of Egypt.[4]

Busied with his eastern wars, Assurbanipal had no leisure to disturb Psammetichus in his hard won independence. Each year saw the Great King engaged in fresh campaigns against nations which resented his odious tyranny. Over these he was able to record a succession of doubtful triumphs, but they were gained with the very lifeblood of his empire. The crushing of

[1] See page 82. [2] B.C. 666–665. *Maspero*, p. 430.

[3] B.C. 656. *Maspero*, p. 488.

[4] *Maspero*, p. 489. E. de Rougé, *Notice de quelques textes hieroglyphiques récemment publiés par M. Greene*, pp. 36–52.

Elam opened the way for the rise of another power, before which Nineveh itself was one day to fall.

The vast range of the Taurus and Anti-Taurus mountains, after skirting the south of Asia Minor, trend south-east, as the mountains of Kurdistan, and north-east, as those of Armenia. There, the broad valley of the Kur divides them from the lofty Caucasus chain, which runs south-east, from the Black Sea to the Caspian; its highest summit, Mount Elbrus, rising to the height of nearly 18,000 feet above the sea. Another gigantic range, running nearly north and south, and now forming the boundary between Kurdistan and Persia, connects, in a rude triangle, the bifurcation of the Armenian and Kurdish mountains, and after thus enclosing the wild upland region of the great salt Lake Van, which lies 5,000 feet above the sea, continues in a south-east direction to the shores of the Indian Ocean. Opposite this rampart of hills, at a distance of about 300 geographical miles, the great range of Elburz—the "watch-towers"—stretches along the south of the Caspian Sea, trending east and south-east till it mingles with the peaks of the Hindoo Kusch; Demavend, its loftiest summit, attaining the awful height of nearly 20,000 feet.

From the western side of this vast bed of mountains, in the long stretch of country once forming Assyria and Elam, flow a succession of streams, cleaving through profound gorges and opening into fertile valleys, to form the tributaries of the Tigris. The regions to the east, on the other hand, enjoy the shelter as of a huge wall, separating them from the disputes and affairs of Western Asia. Lying under the shadow of the highlands, at their northern extremity, the great Lake Urumiyah is formed by streams which pour down from a network of lofty hills on all sides, filling a basin 85 miles in

length, and 25 in breadth. More than 4,000 feet above the sea,[1] and without any outlet, the waters of this vast mountain lake are so salt that no fish can live in them, while the shores sparkle with salt crystals. The rest of the country, however, to the south-east, is a vast rolling table-land, watered by a number of streams, the borders of which are capable of sustaining a large population, though at a distance from them the soil turns to a desert. The mountains produce copper, iron, lead, rich marbles, and many varieties of precious stones. Here and there naked, they are more frequently clothed with thick forests, in which the pine, the oak, and the poplar, the oriental plane, the hazel, and the willow, mark the descending zones of growth. The pear, the apple, the quince, the cherry, the olive, the peach, and the melon, seem indigenous, and flourish luxuriantly in some of the richer valleys; but trees of any kind, though abundant on the mountain slopes, are scarce on the upper table-land, except near streams or lakes. Wheat and vegetables of excellent quality, with many subtropical plants, can, however, be raised wherever irrigation is possible. Thus, as a whole, the country is marked by the charms and defects of a mountainous region. Fertile in some places, it is seamed in others with ridges of bare hills incapable of cultivation, and fertility everywhere depends on the presence of water.[2]

This vast territory, even the valleys of which lie from

[1] Maspero says (p. 452) that Lake Urumiyah is below the sea level, like the Dead Sea, but he is under a mistake. Brockhaus' *Lexicon* (vol. xiv. p. 942) says it is 1,300 metres above the Mediterranean. Maspero has been misled, apparently, by its saltness, which has coupled it with the Dead Sea, in his mind, in more ways than one.

[2] Rawlinson's *Great Monarchies*, vol. iii. pp. 44–72. *Maspero*, pp. 452 ff.

4,000 to 5,000 feet above the sea level—a region of almost Arctic cold in winter, but delightful in spring, and not oppressively warm, in the uplands, even in summer, had been originally inhabited, in common with the whole region of modern Persia, by a Scythian race, related, distantly, in language, to the modern Finns and Turks. These, however, had been subjugated and driven out in a remote age by successive immigrations of Aryans or Indo-Europeans, from the lands east and south-east of the Caspian: a race brave and warlike, but for ages weakened by division into independent tribes. The vast wall of mountains separating them from the valley of the Tigris had not prevented Assyrian ambition from coveting their territory. Their early traditions spoke of one of their kings as having been deposed and crucified by an invader from Nineveh, and from the time of Tiglath-pileser I., in the 12th century before Christ, their land had been repeatedly desolated, its towns sacked and burnt, numbers of its population slain, or carried off as slaves, and its fields swept of their flocks and herds, by the armies of successive Assyrian invaders.

A leader was, however, at last found, able to weld the medley of wild tribes into a nation, and from that moment Media took its place as a formidable power. In some clans the subordinate chiefs had formed an oligarchy controlling the nominal head; in others, the sub-clans had been leagued into rude confederate republics; in still others, a government very similar to that of the ancient Hebrews had obtained, the householder being responsible for his family; the whitebeard or sheik for ten householders; the head of a subclan for every ten or twelve sheiks; a malik for a certain number of these under-chiefs; a prince elected by these ma-

liks ruling over all. If we may credit Herodotus,[1] these various systems were superseded by monarchy, through the influence of one Deioces, towards the close of the 8th century before Christ, and his throne, it is said, passed quietly to his son Phraortes, who forthwith began, like the kings around, to make war on his neighbours. Having first subdued Persia, he next turned to Armenia, which the kings of Assyria had often before invaded, and now claimed as their own. Brought thus into collision with the rulers of Nineveh, Phraortes was beaten and killed in a great battle, about the year B.C. 635.[2]

His authority, however, descended to Cyaxares, his son, a man of commanding military genius, fired with hatred of the Assyrian, and ambitious to found a vast empire. The great rebellion of the brother of Assurbanipal, at Babylon, had shaken the power of the Great King to its foundations. His dominions were, henceforth, in danger on every side. Psammetichus had torn Egypt from him and was now besieging Ashdod. Babylon, under Nabopolassar, a general appointed over the province, as a reward for having reconquered it after the great rebellion, had again risen in revolt, and the Medes, under the dangerous leadership of Cyaxares, were descending the western slopes of the mountains to invade their hereditary enemy from the east. They were sweeping on to besiege Nineveh itself, when their progress was suddenly arrested by a strange and terrible phenomenon.[3]

[1] *Herod.*, i. 102 ff.

[2] Justi, *Gesch. des alten Persiens*, p. 11. *Herod.*, i. 162.

[3] Ewald thinks that Nahum, supposed to have been a Jewish exile living at Elkosh on the Tigris, saw this invasion, and alludes to it. *Geschichte*, vol. iii. p. 743. The exact chronology of these events is very uncertain.

The vast regions of Central Asia were shut off from the ancient civilization of India, Mesopotamia, Syria and Asia Minor, by the great mountain chains of the Himalayah, the Hindoo-Kusch, Caucasus, and Taurus, which had hitherto seemed almost the limits of the habitable world. The wildest fables prevailed respecting the regions beyond this gigantic barrier. Suddenly, however, the mystery was at once, in part, intensified, in part, unveiled. A generation before, the Cimmerians had attempted to break through, but had been driven back by the Great King; but now, again, the southern passes of these awful heights swarmed with the hordes of a strange race, mounted on wiry steppe horses; foul and sordid in their personal habits; living mainly on mare's milk and the cheese made from it, with the occasional addition of horseflesh or other animal food, from vast herds which they brought with them. Their houses—huge tents of felt[1]—were carried with them on wagons, drawn by long files of oxen; and their wives and children accompanied the host. A vase found in a tomb[2] represents the men as wearing long hair and beards, with round or conical bonnets, generally reaching down the neck, close fitting tunics with a belt round the waist, trowsers tied round the ankles, and boots; their weapons, the bow, the spear, the short sword, and the battle axe; with only the shield for protection. From some of their words preserved in Herodotus,[3] they seemed to have belonged to the Indo-European family of nations rather than, as formerly thought, to the Mongolian, and, if so, they formed one of the earliest waves of Aryan migration from the uplands of Asia, in search of a new home.

[1] *Herod.*, iv. 46, 73.
[2] Given in Rawlinson's *Anct. Monarchies*, vol. ii. p. 511.
[3] *Herod.*, iv. 58. So Grimm thinks.

Since then the world has often been alarmed by similar inroads from the same regions—hordes of Gauls, Goths, Vandals, Parthians, Huns, Turks and Tartars,[1] spreading dismay and ruin over the fairest regions of Asia or Europe. But their first sudden irruption on the civilization of the ancient world must have had all the intensity of an unprecedented calamity. It was believed that they drank the blood of their enemies slain in battle; used their skulls for drinking cups,[2] made their skin into a cover for their quivers, and worshipped no god but a naked sword.[3] Nothing is said of them in the meagre record of Kings and Chronicles, but the imagery of the prophets enables us to form some conception of the intense dread with which they were regarded over all Western Asia. The seething cauldron of the North was to spread smoke and flame over Palestine.[4] Its wild hosts, riding on horses, and armed with the bow and javelin, would be cruel and have no mercy. Their battle-shout would be like the roar of the sea.[5] Long after they had disappeared, the impression they had made on the general imagination is seen in the language in which Ezekiel anticipates future invasions from the same regions. Their coming was to be like that of a storm which swept the land assailed; like a cloud, from which were to burst innumerable horses and horsemen, with bucklers and helmets, swords and bows, clubs and spears; horde following horde, spreading dismay and ruin, which seemed to fill the world, in all its kingdoms, with terror. The very fish of the sea,

[1] The word Tartar was originally Tatar. It was changed to its present form through the horror of the populations invaded, to whom such a race seemed the offspring of Tartarus—fiends from the underworld. Trench's *English Past and Present*, p. 184.

[2] *Herod.*, iv. 64, 65.

[3] *Herod.*, iv. 62.

[4] Jer. i. 13.

[5] Jer. vi. 23.

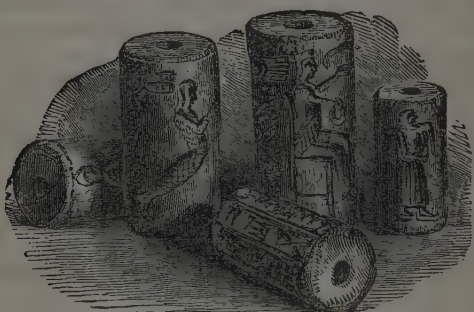
the birds of the air, the creeping things of the earth, and all men upon it, would tremble at their presence; the mountains sink before them; the cliffs topple down. Their overthrow seemed to demand the forces not only of man, but nature; pestilence and blood, rain floods, hailstones, fire and brimstone, conspiring to destroy them; till the deep gorges east of the Dead Sea were filled with their unclean dead, carried thither from the sacred limits of Israel, to sate the vultures and wild beasts of the hills, with the flesh of the mighty, and the blood of princes, and the carcases of chiefs and warriors.[1] In such language men spoke, in the days of Christ, of the similar hosts of the Parthians. St. John, in the Apocalypse, saw four destroying angels, hitherto bound in the river Euphrates, let loose to slay the third part of men. Two hundred thousand horsemen, in mail of fiery blue and brimstone, rode forth through the dried up river bed, an army of hell, to destroy mankind.[2] Nor did the Roman historians use language less striking of these later counterparts of the "Scythians" of Josiah's day. Their accounts of the endless rushing swarms of wild cavalry; their terrible shouts, like the bellowing of beasts, and the hideous clamour of their countless drums, like the noise of thunder; their breastplates and helmets of steel, glittering like lightning; their horses covered with brass and steel trappings; the painted faces of the warriors, and their shaggy hair, gathered in a mass on their foreheads, in the Scythian fashion,[3] seem almost repetitions of the language of the prophets, and enable us to imagine the alarm of the populations on whom such a visitation first descended.

[1] Ezek. xxxviii. and xxxix.

[2] Rev. ix. 14 ff. The dread of a Parthian invasion was then a tradition of a century before.

[3] Plut., *Vitæ* (*Crassus*), iii. 33.

Media, comparatively safe in its wild uplands, escaped with a promise of tribute to the invaders. The cities of Nineveh and Babylon were too strong for a foe which had not learned to besiege walled towns. But the open country, far and near, was laid waste. Horde after horde, passing over it, turned even the richest districts to deserts. Neither sex nor age was spared. Those who did not escape to the mountains or to some stronghold, were either slain or carried off as slaves. The crops were consumed; the herds killed or swept away;



CLAY CYLINDERS, REPRESENTING VARIOUS GODS.

The second on the left represents the fish goddess Derceto, a local form of Ashtoreth, or Venus; the fish form being a symbol of productiveness.

the villages burnt, and even some towns taken by sudden assault. The course of devastation passed on from Mesopotamia to Northern Syria and Phenicia, including Damascus and Palestine. At last it reached the borders of Egypt, but its force was already spent, and Psammetichus was able to bribe the leaders, by rich gifts, to turn back. Retracing their steps, they pillaged the temple of Derceto, at Askelon.[1] But their power

[1] *Herod.*, i. 105.

for evil was now weakened. The losses in so many battles could not be repaired; success drew after it disputes and divisions; perhaps relaxed their energy. The city of Bethshean in Central Palestine, known in after ages as Scythopolis,[1] on the commercial and military route from Egypt to Nineveh, was soon the only spot where any number of them lingered. Once back again beyond the Tigris, Cyaxares is said to have invited their leading chiefs to a banquet, and murdered them while feasting, and to have ultimately succeeded in driving back the whole host to Upper Asia, after a fierce and prolonged war. Their domination had lasted, at most, seven or eight years, from B.C. 634 to 627.[2]

Such a terrible visitation made a deep impression on the popular mind in Judah. Nineveh, though saved for the time, had shown its growing weakness. All Western Asia had bowed the head before the scourge of God. The gods of the nations had not been able to save them. On their way across Palestine the barbarians had, perhaps, attempted to take Jerusalem, for this is hinted, in Ewald's opinion, in the fifty-ninth Psalm.[3] The country population must, at least, have flocked to the fancied security of the capital, from the walls of which pale crowds may have watched the flames and smoke of burning villages and towns. Amidst such universal alarm the faithful among the prophets were true to their lofty mission. They saw in this awful visitation the hand

[1] Euseb., *Praep. Ev.*, ix. 39.

[2] De Saulcy, *Chronologie des empires de Ninivé, de Babylone et d'Ecbatane*, p. 69. Rawlinson's *Great Monarchies*, vol. iii. pp. 178, 187. Lenormant, *Lettres assyriologiques*, 1ère serie, vol. i. pp. 74–83. *Herod.*, i. 104, says that the Scythian rule lasted twenty-eight years, but this is certainly a mistake.

[3] *Geschichte*, vol. iii. p. 748.

of the Almighty, stretched out to punish the idolatry and iniquity around, and earnestly called on their fellow-countrymen to repent. Nor can we doubt that their words fell, at such a time, with unusual weight on the ears of their hearers. The so-called Scythian invasion roused the nation from its long spiritual sleep, and, with the harangues of the prophets, kindled that zeal in king and people, for the restoration of the worship of Jehovah, which culminated soon after in a great religious Reformation.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE PROPHETS NAHUM AND ZEPHANIAH.

OF the various prophets in the earlier years of Josiah, the names of only a few have survived. Among these Nahum,[1] "consolation," chose for his theme, in the brief writing which bears his name, the doom of Nineveh, the great oppressor of the nations, which was so clearly tottering to its fall. His home, Elkosh, has been placed by some in the Christian village of Alkusch, two days journey from the site of Ancient Nineveh, on the east bank of the Tigris, whither, it is supposed, he had been carried off, perhaps at the same time as Manasseh, and where a spot is still shown as his grave. A Jewish tradition, recorded by Jerome,[3] claims, on the other hand, that he was a Galilean, of the village of Elkese, which had been long in ruins when the Father

[1] Keil assigns Nahum to the second half of the reign of Hezekiah, say about B.C. 709. *Die kl. Proph.*, p. 373. Hitzig and Steiner give his date as about B.C. 627; Schrader, as about B.C. 660. *Keilinschriften*, p. 290. Ewald as about B.C. 630. *Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 847. W. A. Wright, in *Smith's Dict. of the Bible*, as about B.C. 645; Kleinert, in *Riehm*, as about B.C. 650; Eichhorn, as B.C. 626.

[2] So Tuch, Ewald, Kleinert and others.

[3] Niebuhr, *Reisen*, vol. ii. p. 352.

visited it.[1] Capernaum, indeed, which may have been Elkese, means the village of Nahum. But though it is not impossible that we may thus have a local memorial of the prophet, it is apparently only a pleasing conjecture. Assyrian words occurring, as Ewald maintains, in the prophecy, seem to show, in contradiction to Jerome's tradition, that we have in "Nahum" the voice of an exile of the Ten Tribes, himself a spectator of the march of the Medes under Cyaxares, against the great city.

In the imminent danger which thus threatened Assyria, Nahum, with the feelings of an ancient Jew, rightly saw the judgment of God on the fierce enemy of mankind, and the centre of heathen wickedness. His words glow with the hatred of a patriot, at the foe which had carried off his fellow-countrymen into distant banishment, and desolated his native land. His abhorrence at the wickedness of the great city is only equalled by his exultation at its fall, as the enemy of Jehovah, of Israel, and of the human race. The lion's den is at last to be invaded. All the world claps its hands for joy, when the storm of Divine wrath has finally swept away the great destroyer of nations.

This magnificent song of triumph over the fall of the Assyrian capital is strangely interesting, as the last echo of prophecy heard from any survivor of the Ten Tribes. Nor is it without a grand moral fitness that a lonely exile, one of the innumerable victims of her tyranny, should be the solitary voice that made known to future ages her irrevocable doom.

Filled with a sense of the greatness of God in crushing the once mighty empire, the prophet, as becomes a Jew,

[1] Prologue to *Comm. on Nahum*. Nöldeke, Keil and Steiner, think Nahum a Galilean, living in Galilee.

opens with a recognition of His supreme majesty and power, as the ruler of the world.

Jehovah[1] is a jealous and revenging God; Jehovah revenges, and pours out His wrath: He forgets nothing that His enemies have done![2] Jehovah, though slow to anger, is of great power, and will by no means leave wickedness in the end unpunished. Jehovah has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet.

He rebukes the sea,[3] and makes it dry with the glow of His wrath, and drieth up all the rivers; Bashan and Carmel wither, and the verdure of Lebanon fades. The mountains tremble[4] before Him; the hills melt for terror, and the earth springs back from His presence; the earth with all that is on it. Who can stand before His indignation? Who can abide His fiercely burning anger? His wrath pours down like a rain of fire, and the rocks are rent asunder before Him!

But the Divine anger passes over those who are faithful to Him, and burns only against His adversaries. This introduces the announcement of His determination to take vengeance on Nineveh.

Jehovah is good;[5] a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knoweth them that trust in Him. But He will utterly sweep away the very place of Nineveh as with an overwhelming flood; He will chase His enemies into the darkness of Sheol.

He now addresses Nineveh directly.

What do you propose, by which to withstand Jehovah?[6] It will be idle. He will make an utter end of Nineveh. Judah need fear no further trouble from her![7]

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[1] Nahum i. 1-3.

[2] "He keeps alive His wrath against His foes."

[3] Nahum i. 4-6. [4] Ewald and Kleinert have "groan."

[5] Nahum i. 7-8. [6] Nahum i. 9-13.

[7] Ewald renders these words, "There will be no need to repeat the blow on Nineveh a second time." So, also, in ver. 12 ff. Steiner and Hitzig agree with this.

Strong in numbers and in allies, ye men of Nineveh, ye may be joined close and terrible as matted thorns; ye may boast in your drink that no power can harm you—like the drunkards you are[1]—yet, like thorns, the fiery wrath of Jehovah will devour you; like stubble fully dry.[2] From thee went out him [3] that imagined evil against Jehovah, a counsellor of Belial,[4] purposing the destruction of my people! But thus says Jehovah: "Be the armies of Assyria and her allies ever so strong and so many, they will be swept away,[5] and he, My enemy, shall perish." Though I have chastised thee, O Israel, through the Assyrians, in the past, thou wilt suffer from them no more.[6] For now the day long pre-announced has come, when I will break his yoke from off thee, and will tear asunder thy bonds.[7]

But respecting thee, O Nineveh,[8] Jehovah has commanded that "no more shall there be a posterity bearing thy name! I will destroy the graven image of stone and the molten image of metal from the house of thy god; and I will defile the site of thy ruined temples with dead men's bones,[9] making these temples thy grave; for thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting." [10]

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[1] This passage is thought by Gesenius to mean that they would be cut down while marching in close phalanx, and intoxicated to reeling. *Lex.*, p. 708.

[2] On this passage see *Ges. Lex.*, p. 708, under the word Saba.

[3] The various kings of Assyria typified as Nimrod. Mic. v. 5. Noldeke thinks Sennacherib is referred to. So, Ewald.

[4] Belial is the word here used in the Hebrew Bible, but it was not used as a proper name till much later, though I have introduced it as such.

[5] Lit., "mowed down."

[6] Thus De Wette, Kleinert, Noyes, Keil. The Sept. version of ver. 12 is strange, "Thus saith Jehovah, who rules over many waters, Even thus shall they be sent away, and the report of thee shall not be heard anywhere."

[7] Isa. x. 24–27. [8] Nahum i. 14.

[9] Lev. xxvi. 30. 2 Kings xxiii. 13. Jer. vii. 32; xix. 11. Ezek. vi. 5.

[10] See Dan. v. 27. On this passage consult Böttcher's *Aehrenlese*, vol. ii. p. 207. Ges. renders it, "Thou art become small; thy

The vision of the siege of the great city now rises before the prophet, and messengers are speeding to the West, to announce to Judah the glad news that her oppressor has fallen.

See![1] yonder, on thy mountains O Judah, are the feet of the messenger bringing thee the good tidings, proclaiming "Peace, for the oppressor has fallen!" "Keep thy feasts of thanksgiving; pay thy vows! for never more shall the Man of Wickedness invade thee; he is utterly destroyed!"

The army of the enemy now approaches Nineveh, and the prophet calls out in irony:—

The Hammer of War[2]—the Median king—comes up against thee![3] Man thy defences! Let thy warders watch every approach! gird the sword on thy loins; muster all thy strength! For Jehovah is about to restore the land of its old glory to Jacob, and to His own chosen Israel,[4] for the plunderers have spoiled it, tearing off its boughs, the tribes—and destroying its clusters, their fair communities.

A description of the Median army prepared for battle, and a picture of the final catastrophe of Nineveh, follows.

The shields of the Median heroes[5] are painted with the war colour—red.[6] Their valiant warriors are in scarlet;[7] the steel

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power is broken." But this is clearly a misconception of the force of the words.

[1] **Nahum i. 15.**

[2] Mace, maul; comp. the word, "*Maccabee*" or Charles *Martel.*

[3] **Nahum ii. 1, 2.**

[4] *De Wette. Kleinert. Keil.* Ewald thinks Jacob, Judah. So Eichhorn.

[5] **Nahum ii. 3–5.**

[6] Perhaps the copper on the shields—red with reflection—is meant. Jos., *Ant.*, XIII. xii. 5.

[7] Red was the favourite colour of the Medes. So also of the Babylonians. Ezek. xxiii. 14. Layard's *Nineveh*, p. 347. The

bosses and fittings of their chariots, set in battle array, flash like fire,[1] and their spear-shafts of cypress quiver. Within Nineveh itself the chariots rush madly through the streets; they rattle wildly, hither and thither, through the open spaces; they gleam from their steel bosses; they flash swiftly to this point and that, like the lightning. The king, in the city, shall bethink him of his noted warriors, trusting to them, but their steps totter as they rush on, thus suddenly summoned to the defence, unprepared, as if waked from sleep. They hasten to the walls, but the testudo[2] has already been set up against them.

ASSYRIAN STANDARD. KHORSABAD.

### But, now, the city is taken.

The city gates,[3] defended by broad canals from the Tigris, are burst open, and the palace is broken down, and sinks into ruin.[4] The queenly city is taken;[5] her veil torn off; and her maids moan for her with the sad voice of doves, as they beat their breasts. As for Nineveh, her abundant

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Assyrian colour was blue. Ezek. xxiii. 6; xxvii. 23. Blood red was, indeed, the favourite colour for robes of battle, in antiquity. *Val. Max.*, ii. 6. *Ael. Var. Hist.*, vi. 6.

[1] Scythe chariots were first introduced by Cyrus.

[2] A strong cover, under protection of which the besiegers advanced to force a passage through the gates or to make a breach in the walls. It was either a tower from which the assailants could reach the defenders of the wall, or a strong roof under which a battering ram was plied against the ramparts. *Layard*, p. 377.

[3] Nahum ii. 6-8. [4] *Gesenius. Kleinert.*

[5] The word here used—Hutzab—occurs only in this place. Ewald, Hitzig, Steiner, and Eichhorn think it the name of the chief queen. Others translate it as from a verb Natzab, "It is determined" by God. Thus Kleinert, and Keil.

streams, hitherto flowing in their channels—symbols of her prosperity—now spread over her like a wide sea. Her warriors flee. "Make a stand, make a stand," cries their leader, but no one looks round or turns back!

"Take,[1] ye brave Medes, the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold; [2] there is no end of the treasures, or of the costly booty of every kind. There is nothing now but desolation, emptiness, ruin! The heart melts for terror; the knees smite together; the loins tremble, and the faces of all grow pallid.

Where is now the den of lions [3]—the feeding place of the young lions; where the lion, the lioness, and their whelps had their quarters, afraid of none? Where is the lion that tore in pieces for his whelps, and killed for his lionesses, and filled his dens with prey, his lairs with ravin?

Behold, I am against thee, saith Jehovah of Hosts, and I shall burn up thy chariots in smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions, and I shall free the earth, henceforth, from thy violence, and the threats of thy messengers shall be heard no more.

The theme of the prophet has now virtually been exhausted, but his emotion will not let him close. In the third chapter he begins it once more; as if again a spectator of the great catastrophe.

[1] Nahum ii. 9-10.

[2] Gold mines seem formerly to have been worked in the Assyrian territory. Sardanapalus is said to have had 150 golden beds, and as many golden tables on his funeral pile, as well as vast numbers of gold and silver vases, and purple and many-coloured garments. The image of gold raised on the plain of Dura by Nebuchadnezzar was 60 cubits high and 6 broad (Dan. iii. 1). Xerxes carried off a golden image of Bel, at Babylon, 12 cubits in height. According to Diodorus the value of the gold taken from the temple of this god alone was equal to £21,000,000 of our money. Layard's *Nineveh*, vol. ii. pp. 416-17. When Ahasuerus feasted all the people in Shushan, the palace, wine was given them in vessels of gold, each different from the other.

[3] Nahum ii. 11-13.

Woe to the city of blood![1] it is full of treachery and violence; it never ceases from harrying the nations!

Hark! the cracking of whips! hark! the rattling of wheels! the gallop of horses,[2] the bounding of chariots! cavalry rushing on with the flash of swords! footmen with glittering spears! heaps of slain! countless dead! they stumble over mounds of corpses!

The cause of this appalling judgment is once more rehearsed. The deceitful friendship and crafty politics by which the rulers of Nineveh had inveigled nations to their ruin, as if by witchcraft, are compared to the arts of a harlot.[3] Perhaps, also, its seducing idolatry, which had spread far and near, by trade and otherwise and had corrupted states so as to make them an easy prey to the Assyrian king, may be included.[4]

This, all, has come,[5] because of the many whoredoms of the well-favoured harlot, skilled in the witchcraft of secret intrigues and of baleful idolatry; who has sold free nations into slavery through her whoredoms, and kingdoms through her wicked arts.

Behold! I am against thee, says Jehovah of Hosts; I will throw thy skirts over thy head, and show the nations thy nakedness and the kingdoms thy shame. And I will throw abominable filth at thee, and dishonour thee, and make thee a gazing-stock And whoso sees thee will flee from thee and say—"Nineveh is destroyed!" But who will bewail her! Where shall I find sympathizers with her in her sorrow? For her doom has been deserved!

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[1] Nahum iii. 1-3.

[2] *Gesenius*, "causing his horse to rear." The Assyrian cavalry were armed with swords and bows or with swords and long spears. They wore short tunics, their legs and feet were bare, and they had originally no saddles, but sat with their knees almost on a level with the horse's back. An archer on horseback was attended by a comrade who rode at his side, and held his reins while he discharged his arrows. Layard's *Nineveh*, vol. ii. p. 357.

[3] *Hitzig. Keil.* [4] *Kleinert.* [5] Nahum iii. 4-7.

Nineveh may think itself strong and able to resist all attack; but what had been the fate of Thebes, at its hands, when Assurbanipal assailed it.[1]

Art[2] thou better than No[3]—the city of Amon—the solar God—enthroned on both sides of the stream of the Nile amidst its broad canals—girdled by waters—whose rampart round it was sea-like streams, forming its strong wall of defence! The valiant Cush,[4] Egypt with its countless hosts, Put[5] and the Lybians were

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[1] Esarhaddon also plundered Thebes about B.C. 680. In Assurbanipal's Annals we are told that, when that king was pursuing Rudamon, the successor of Tirhakah, "In trust on Assur, Sur, and the great gods, my lords, my troops defeated him in a great battle, on a wide plain, and overcame his army. Rudamon then fled alone and betook himself to No, his royal city. My troops followed him in a march of a month and ten days, over dreadful roads, and took that city in its whole circuit, and drove the enemy away like chaff. Gold and silver as the dust of their land; vessels, etc., of molten metal; precious stones, the plunder of the palace, garments of Berom . . . great horses, men and women, in countless numbers I led away to captivity to Nineveh, my capital, bringing them safely thither, and they kissed my feet. This happened about B.C. 660. *Keilinschriften*, p. 290.

Thebes, or, in Old Egyptian, Tepe—this being its public, as "No" was its sacred, name,—lay on both sides of the Nile, which is 1,500 feet broad at the spot. The Lybian and Arabian hills on the two sides of the river retire from it at this place, leaving a plain on which there are now nine larger and smaller villages, with their groves of date-palms and fields of sugar-cane, grain, etc. All this space was occupied by Thebes, the ruins of which still excite the wonder of visitors, as they did that of the old Greeks and Romans.

[2] Nahum iii. 8-10.

[3] No = "the great city," *Brugsch*, vol. i. p. 247. No-Ammon = "Seat of Ammon." His "inheritance," "possession," *Mühlau und Volck*. "Dwelling of Ammon," *Keil*.

[4] Cush, or Ethiopia, lay to the south of Thebes, and had been closely connected with it, under Tirhakah and other kings.

[5] Put. Vassal tribes of Arabs. *Ebers*. A race living west of

thy strength, O Thebes! Yet, in spite of all this, she was carried off into exile and slavery; her little children were dashed in pieces against the walls of each street; they cast lots for all her nobles, who should have them for slaves; and her great men were bound in chains!

Thou, also,[1] O Nineveh, wilt drink the cup of the wrath of the Almighty, and be drunken with it! Darkness will come over thine eyes;[2] thou too wilt seek a refuge from the enemy! All thy fortresses are like fig-trees with early figs: shake them and the figs fall into the mouth of the eater! Behold! thy men are like women, for terror; they will open the gates of the land to the foe; fire will devour thy gate bars.

Draw water[3] and store it up in preparation for the siege; repair thy fortresses; work the clay, and tread the mortar to make bricks for them; make ready the brick kilns, and strengthen thy walls and towers! Yet fire will devour thee; the sword will destroy thee; it will eat thee up as the locust eats the leaves of the field, were ye innumerable as locusts, and countless as grasshoppers! Thy traders—the hosts that bring gains of peace and of war to thee—who spread themselves out like locusts to spoil, will flee away.[4] Thy chosen warriors[5] are like locusts; thy vassals[6] like grasshoppers, which light on the hedges when it is cold, but, when the sun rises, flee away, and there is no sign where they have been.

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the Libyans, themselves the next people to the west of the Egyptian Delta. *Riehm.*

[1] Nahum iii. 11-13.

[2] Gesenius, Keil, Kleinert, "be covered with darkness, and forgotten." Ewald, as in the text.

[3] Nahum iii. 14-19. Access to the Tigris might be cut off.

[4] Ewald understands this passage to mean, that they will be like the locusts, which spread themselves out while yet without wings, but suddenly unfold them and fly away.

[5] An Assyrian word rendered "Princes" by some; as in the text by others. Böttcher's *Aehrenlese* understands the word as meaning "Thy levies of foot-soldiers (vol. ii. pp. 208-9).

[6] An Accadian word, lit., Scribes; Fried. Delitzsch. Lenormant says it is an Assyrian official title: Steiner leaves it unexplained. I have given the rendering of Böttcher and Mühlau, *Aehrenlese*, vol. ii. p. 210.

Thy princes, the shepherds of thy empire, sleep, O king of Assyria; thy nobles slumber: thy people are scattered over the mountains, and no one gathers them. Incurable is thy wound! mortal thy stroke! All who hear of thee clap their hands at thy fall! For on whom has not thy wickedness gone forth continually?[1].

While Nahum, far from Jerusalem, was thus chanting his grand death-song of Nineveh, another prophet—Zephaniah—was seeking to rouse the Jewish capital from spiritual sleep, and bring it back to its ancient faith. The awful lessons of the Scythian invasion, and the warnings of the prophets, had already produced some effect; for a beginning, at least, had been made of the reforms which Josiah, during the next few years, was to carry out so thoroughly. The young king himself feared Jehovah, but his nearest relations and courtiers were the strength of the heathen party. The Law, though known, was systematically neglected or violated.[2] The worship of Jehovah was now restored; but Baal, and Moloch, and the Host of Heaven, were more esteemed.[3] The idols still boasted their priests and services;[4] the prophets were largely apostate.[5] The people had almost lost the idea of religion, and indifference largely prevailed even where there was not active idolatry. The great thought of the community was gain; it was no advantage, men urged, to serve Jehovah, and they therefore thought nothing of Him.

Zephaniah seems to have been the great-grandson of king Hezekiah,[6] and as such must have spoken with special weight.[7] Threatening mingles with appeal, ex-

[1] The historical notices of the destruction of Nineveh will be given in their proper place.
[2] Zeph. iii. 3.
[3] Zeph. i. 4. Jer. vi. 20; vii. 17.
[4] Zeph. i. 7.
[5] Zeph. iii. 4. Jer. v. 13.
[6] Zeph. i. 1.
[7] Zephaniah is stated to have prophesied in the days of Josiah.

hortation, and promise, but the evil of the times makes the threats most prominent. The great day of judgment from Jehovah for the sins of Jerusalem is coming upon her, but the nation to be used as His instrument is not named, though, as in all the other prophets since Joel,[1] it is announced as coming on the city from the north, its weakest side. We must imagine a crowd listening while the prophet thus addresses them.

I will utterly[2] sweep away everything from the face of the land, says Jehovah. I will sweep away man and cattle:[3] I will sweep away the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, and the idols[4]—those offences to Me—with their worshippers, the wicked. And I will destroy man from off the land, says Jehovah! And I will stretch out my hand against Judah, and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And I will destroy from this place—Jerusalem—what yet remains of Baal worship[5] and other idolatry, and utterly root out the black-robed Chemarim appointed by the kings of Judah for the service of the high places, and for the corrupted worship of Jehovah,[6] and the special idol-priests—I will root them out so that their very name will perish. And I will root out them that bow down to the host of heaven upon the housetops; them also that bow down to Jehovah and swear by Him, while also swearing by Molech, their king of heaven: the ungodly also who have drawn back from Jehovah, and do not seek Him in prayer, or trouble themselves to ask respecting Him.

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Schrader thinks he did so in the period between B.C. 630–617. The *Dict. of the Bible* says B.C. 630. Josiah had reigned twelve years before the cleansing of the land from idolatry commenced, and it lasted till his 18th year. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 3, 8. Zephaniah was thus strictly a contemporary of Jeremiah, who began to prophesy in the 13th year of Josiah. Jer. i. 2.

[1] Joel ii. 20. [2] Zeph. i. 2-6. [3] Hos. iv. 3.

[4] Machshailoth—"what cause a state or a soul to fall"—hence in A.V. "stumbling blocks;" margin, "idols."

[5] The reforms of Josiah had begun.

[6] 2 Kings xxiii. 5. Hos. x. 5.

## The day of God's visitation approaches.

Hush ye![1] before the Lord Jehovah! for the day of Jehovah is near: for Jehovah has prepared a sacrifice—the people of Judah; He has set apart those called to the feast—the nations appointed to consume Jacob!

And it shall be in the day of Jehovah's sacrifice, that I, Jehovah, will punish the princes and the kings' sons,[2] and all others who wear costly foreign dress.[3] In that day, also, I will punish every one who leaps over the threshold:[4] and those who fill their master's house with the fruits of violence and treachery![5]

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[1] Zeph. i. 7-9.

[2] The sons of Manasseh or Amon—uncles or brothers of Josiah—their whole circle is included.

[3] Some probably affected Egyptian fashions; others Assyrian; always costly, often idolatrous in its ornaments; an index, moreover, of hearts alienated from the national manners, and of the loss of national spirit, political or religious. Egyptian dress, besides, was expressly forbidden by the Law. Lev. xix. 19.

[4] The words of this clause are understood by some (Kleinert) to refer to the Philistine custom of leaping over the threshold of the temple of Dagon (1 Sam. v. 5); by Hitzig, to superstitious leaping over the threshold of the palace, as sacred—a Persian usage to this day. Others, as Ewald, Rosenmüller, Keil, and Calvin, suppose it refers to a violent, sudden entrance into houses, for purposes of robbery. See the next clause. On the narrow basis of this very doubtful phrase, "scientific criticism" (*Bible in Jewish Church*, p. 250) actually builds up the theory that the temple was guarded by a foreign watch during the time of the kings, and that thus the "principles of Levitical sanctity were never recognised or enforced under the first temple." It really creates, out of the few words of the text, a military corps bearing the "familiar characters of Oriental Janissaries!" The whole passage, given above, is ample refutation of all this.

[5] The rich in the East—that is the gentlemen and courtiers—are largely traders, and their position, under lawless despotisms, has in all ages tempted them, too often, to exactions and injustice. The other traders in the community were largely foreigners (ver. 11).

In that day,[1] there shall rise, says Jehovah, a cry from the Fish gate, on the north-east of the city, and a loud wail from the lower town, and an echoing crash from the hills around, as the enemy forces his way into and through the city. Howl! ye inhabitants of Makdesh—"the hollow"[2]—the foreign trader's quarter of Jerusalem in the Tyropœan valley—west of the temple—for all the Canaanite[3] dealers—the traffickers of the town—are silenced in death; all that are laden with silver for buying or selling. And at that time I will search through Jerusalem with lamps, and punish them who sit with their feet drawn up under them, still and untroubled, like wine left on its lees; who say in their heart, "There is no use heeding the prophets. Jehovah has nothing to do with either the good or the evil one meets; it all happens by chance!" Their goods will be plundered; their houses made a desolation; they build houses, but shall not live in them; they plant vineyards, but shall not drink of the wine!

The great day of Jehovah is near:[4] near, and coming very swiftly, in the thunder of the day of Jehovah! Bitterly will even the mighty man of war cry out then! That day will be a day of wrath! a day of sore trouble and distress! a day of ruin and desolation! a day of gloom and darkness! a day of clouds, and black night! a day of trumpet peals and shrill blasts, against the walled towns and their high towers! And I will bring distress on men so that they shall walk as if blind, finding no way out of the danger, because they have sinned against Jehovah: and their blood shall be poured out as no more worth than the dust of the street; and their corpses trodden under foot like mire. Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them in the day of Jehovah's wrath; the whole land will be consumed by the fire of God's indignation; for death, ay, a terrible death, will He mete out to all the dwellers in the land!

Having thus delivered his awful "burden," the prophet breaks off into an earnest exhortation to all, to turn to Jehovah and save themselves. He enforces his counsels by painting the judgments impending over the heathen kingdoms around, naming one in each quarter of

[1] Zeph. i. 10–13.
[2] Or "mortar."
[3] Zech. xiv. 21.
[4] Zeph. i. 14–18.

the heavens, west, east, north, and south, to show how far-reaching and overwhelming will be the doom of God's enemies.

Bow yourselves in penitence,[1] bow yourselves,[2] O people, hitherto stout-hearted and undismayed at the threatenings of Jehovah[3]—before the Divine decree is carried out; the brief delay passes like chaff before the wind! Before the burning anger of Jehovah comes upon you, before the day of the wrath of Jehovah breaks over you, seek ye Jehovah, all ye meek of the land, who have obeyed His law; seek righteousness, seek meekness, that ye may be hidden from the storm in the day of the wrath of Jehovah!

For GAZA[4] shall be forsaken, and ASCALON will be blotted out; the people of ASHDOD will be driven out of it in the broad day, when men rest and danger is least feared; and EKRON shall be razed to the ground. Woe to the inhabitants of the sea coast, the nation of the Cretans.[5] This is the word of Jehovah concerning you, O Canaan,[6] the land of the Philistines. I will destroy thee till I empty thee of inhabitants, and the sea coast, now so populous, shall be pasture-homes for shepherds, and folds[7] for flocks. Then will the coast become the portion of the remnant

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[1] Zeph. ii. 1–3.

[2] *Kleinert.* Lit., "collect yourselves, your thoughts; consider, examine yourselves." The idea is taken from gathering stubble. Böttcher paraphrases it: "put your thoughts together to repent, and thus save yourselves from the fire of God's wrath, which threatens to consume you like stubble."

[3] Lit., "people whose faces have not grown pale."

[4] Philistia was west of Judah. Zeph. ii. 4–7.

[5] Lit., "Cherethites." See vol. iii. pp. 95, 223, 394. They were a branch of the Philistines.

[6] Philistia is here called Canaan, from its being devoted, like Phenicia, to commerce, and from its being only a continuation of the Phenician or Canaanite sea plain. See Num. xiii. 29. Wilton, *The Negeb*, pp. 21, 245.

[7] The word is the plural of "gedairah," the same word as "jedar," which is still the name in Palestine for the dry-stone

of the House of Judah, and they will pasture their flocks and herds on it, camping in the deserted ruins of ASCALON by night. For Jehovah their God will visit His people, and bring them back from captivity.[1]

I have heard[2] the scornful taunting of MOAB,[3] and the revilings of the B'NAI AMMON, who have spoken contemptuously of My people, and have haughtily invaded its borders.[4] Therefore, as I live, says Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel, Moab shall assuredly be like Sodom, and the B'nai Ammon like Gomorrah—a possession of nettles, and a place of salt pits,[5] and a perpetual desolation. The remnant of My people will plunder them and hold them as slaves.[6] This will be their lot for their pride, because they insulted the people of Jehovah of Hosts, and acted haughtily against them.

Fearful is Jehovah[7] in His judgments upon them! For He annihilates all the gods of the earth, bringing to ruin the lands over which they have reigned,[8] and bringing low their people, so

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enclosures used for walls of orchards, sheepfolds, etc. They are built of stones of all sizes, laid as compactly as possible together, to the height of from four to six feet, though at times higher, the bottom broad, to support the superstructure. Neil's *Palestine Explored*, p. 53.

[1] To avoid an acknowledgment of a strictly prophetical element in Scripture, Kuenen translates this, "restore them to prosperity."

[2] Zeph. ii. 8–10. [3] Moab lay east of Judah.

[4] Since the deportation of Israel, Moab and Ammon had virtually taken possession of the territories east of Jordan. Jer. xlviii., xlix. They were always striving moreover to encroach on the Hebrews—Amos i. 13; Isa. xv. 4—and for a length of time invaded them each year, 2 Kings xiii. 20. In fact, since the reign of David, there had been the fiercest hatred between the two peoples, though they were related by blood.

[5] The district at the south of the Dead Sea is a wide bed of rock salt, which rises in huge masses, and is quarried out as an object of trade.

[6] This seems the meaning of the phrase, "shall possess them,' or "have them for an inheritance."

[7] Zeph. ii. 11–15. [8] Isa. xlvi. 1.

that they shall worship Him, their conqueror, every one from his place, even from the far off coasts and islands of the heathen!

Even you, ye CUSHITES, in the far south, the slain of My sword are ye!

And, as in the South, so Jehovah will stretch out His hand against the North, and destroy Assyria, and make Nineveh a desolation—a parched wilderness! troops of wild beasts of all kinds shall lie down in the midst of her; the pelican and the bittern[1] shall lodge on the tops[2] of her pillars; their cry shall sound through the window or broken wall;[3] the threshold, trodden now by so many, will be desolate; for Jehovah has laid bare and torn down the carvings of cedar![4]

This is the joyful city that dwelt in careless security, that said in her heart, "I stand by myself, and have no rival;" how has she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! Every one that passes by her shall hiss, and wave his hand for joy![5]

The prophet now turns from recounting God's judgments on the heathen nations, to renew his exhortation to Jerusalem to repent, and escape similar judgments.

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[1] Kleinert, Ewald, Eichhorn, Keil, Noyes, and De Wette, translate this word as "hedgehog." Dr. Sachs renders it "frogs." Hitzig suggests "the owl" or "bittern." Tristram says, "the hedgehog or porcupine never resorts to marshy places, nor are they characteristic of ruins. The bittern is far more probably the creature intended by the prophet. It is very abundant in the reedy marshes of the Tigris close by Nineveh." *Natural History of Bible*, p. 244.

[2] Their capitals, or chapiters.

[3] Hallōn is a window or opening for light, but it may well mean here a rent in the wall.

[4] See *Mühlau und Volck*. See also *Hitzig*. Böttcher translates this: "Lord Jehovah will utterly destroy it, or lay it bare," referring the words to "the threshold." Layard thinks that the Assyrian palaces were only panelled or wainscoted with cedar, which was very costly.

[5] On the fulfilment of prophecy in the case of Nineveh, see Layard's *Nineveh*, vol. i. p. 71.

Woe to thee, O stiffnecked,[1] polluted; O city of violence! which listens to no warning voice of its prophets, which receives not admonition; does not trust in Jehovah; does not draw near to God. Her head men within her are roaring lions, devouring the weak and poor; her judges are insatiable as evening wolves, eager and fierce after prey in the darkness, and leaving nothing of it till morning. Her prophets are vain talkers and deceivers; her priests profane the temple and violate the Law. Jehovah is just, in the midst of her. He does no unrighteousness; morning by morning, continually, He makes known His impending judgments, but the unrighteous city knows no shame. He tells them, "I have destroyed nations who sinned against Me; laid their strongholds desolate; made their streets silent, none passing over them; desolated their cities till they are without a man, without an inhabitant! I said in my heart, 'Surely thou, Jerusalem, wilt now fear Me and receive admonition, that thy dwelling, Mount Zion, should not be destroyed, as I had determined against thee?' But they have only the more eagerly increased their shameful deeds."

Counsel and warning being thus in vain, Jehovah will surely execute His threatenings, not on Jerusalem only, but on other nations also. He will not, however, forget His faithful ones. His truth will one day triumph over the world, and those who trust in Him may rejoice in this anticipation!

Therefore,[2] wait ye on Me, ye meek, whose are the promises, saith Jehovah, till the day when I rise up to judgment. For it is My will[3] to gather together the nations, and assemble the kingdoms, and pour on them My indignation—all My fierce anger! For all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy!

This over, I shall give to the peoples a pure lip,[4] removing the uncleanness of lips hitherto polluted by the names of false gods, that they may all call on the name of Jehovah, and serve Him

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[1] Zeph. iii. 1-7. Zeph. iii. 8-13.
[2] "Till My time has come." *Böttcher*, vol. ii. p. 212.
[4] See Isa. vi. 5-7. Jer. i. 9. Dan. x. 16.

with one consent.[1] From beyond the rivers of Cush, in the farthest south, will they bring as an offering to Me, My worshippers, the sons of My dispersed.[2] In that day thou shalt no longer need to be ashamed for doings like those in which thou hast sinned against me in the past; for I will remove from thy midst all thy proud boasters, and thou wilt no longer carry thyself haughtily towards Me on My holy hill. For I will leave in thy midst only a people humble and meek,[3] who trust in the name of Jehovah. This remnant of Israel will not do wrong or speak lies, and a deceitful tongue will not be found in their mouth, but, as the flock of Jehovah,[4] they will feed and rest, and no one will make them afraid.

Rejoice, O daughter of Zion;[5] shout for joy, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all thy heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! Jehovah has taken away the judgments under which thou hast suffered: He has removed thy enemy far from thee; Jehovah, the king of Israel, is in the midst of thee; thou shalt see evil no more! In that day it will be said to Jerusalem, "Fear not;" and to Zion, "Let not thy hands fall down in alarm." Jehovah, thy God, is in thy midst, a Mighty One who will save thee; He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will give Himself up to the silent fulness of His love;[6] He will joy over thee with singing. Those who sigh in exile, afar off, for the joyful assemblage at the sacred feasts,[7] I will gather from their dispersion; for they also are of Israel, and the shame of slavery still rests upon them.[8] Behold, I will deal

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[1] Lit., "shoulder.

[2] Lit., "the daughter of." Ewald translates the verse: "From the banks of the rivers of Cush will they bring My incense; the daughter of Put will bring me My gift." The word rendered "suppliant" or "worshipper" means also "incense." The word "dispersed" is "putzai," for which Ewald reads "Put," the country west of (Lybia).

[3] = Godly. [4] Micah iv. 4; vii. 14. Luke xii. 32.

[5] Zeph. iii. 14–20.

[6] "Will renew the joy of His early love." Ewald, in effect. The meaning in the text seems more correct, though the Hebrew is amplified to make the sense clearer.

[7] Especially that of the Tabernacles, the most gladsome of all. Hos. xii. 10.

[8] De Wette translates: "Far from thee shall be the shame

with all thine oppressors at that time, and I will deliver even the helpless lame, so complete will be My help, and will gather those that were driven out from this land, and will make them be honoured, and give them a name in all the lands where they have been put to shame. At that time I will bring you back again hither, and gather you, for I will give you a name and honour among all the peoples of the earth, when I bring back your ransomed captives before your eyes, says Jehovah.

A phenomenon, surely, preaching like this, unexampled in the history of any people or age! Imagine an orator at St. Paul's, not in our own happy days, but in the Sodom and Gomorrah times of the last Stuarts or of the Regency, denouncing the royal family as roaring and devouring lions; the judges as insatiable wolves; the clergy as mere talkers and deceivers, and as polluting the temple and violating the law of God![1] Imagine a preacher, even now, who feared only God, and spoke accordingly! Fancy him declaring that the Divine judgments for the wickedness of all classes, high and low, would sweep over the land like a destroying flood, unless all alike repented! Dean Colet before the Reformation, and Latimer and John Knox in its hours of struggle, are perhaps the only parallels in our history. Enthusiasm is not in favour in our day. To speak boldly for God is vulgar. Satan has his own place amongst us, and as an established institution should be treated handsomely.

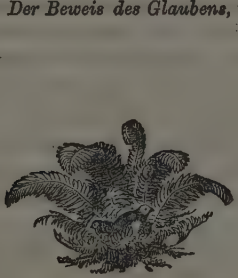
But this fearless courage, standing up for God in the face of power, officialism, and vested interests, was not the only striking characteristic of the preaching of the prophets.

which is thy burden." Eichhorn: "And woe to those who would load thee with shame." Ewald: "Thou land on which they cast reproach." Sachs: "From them who mourn for the place of festal gathering will I take away the reproach borne by thee on their account, at their being thus far from thee (in exile)."

[1] See Zeph. iii. 3, 4.

The national outlook was of the blackest; deportation of the people at large to a foreign country, after the horrors of invasion, was accepted as certain. Yet faith in the promises of God to His chosen race never wavered. It was held certain, on the strength of His word, that He would bring them back from exile, and restore the throne of David, and introduce the glorious times of the Messianic reign. Such faith in the imperishableness of the people of God, notwithstanding the ruin which was to overwhelm the then living generation; such faith in the future triumph of true religion, with all its spiritual blessings, speaks of convictions based on far higher and nobler grounds than mere political shrewdness or human sagacity.[1] Nor is it less wonderful that the preacher should speak with an absolute confidence in a restoration from captivity, itself a generation distant—a restoration which was not effected till fully a hundred years after the speaker's death. What less than Divine inspiration, in its strictest sense, can account for predictions so circumstantial, and so exactly verified?

[1] Vilmar, E., *Der Beweis des Glaubens*, p. 38. 1869.



## CHAPTER VII.

### THE EARLY PREACHING OF JEREMIAH.

ABOUT the same time as Zephaniah appeared, another prophet, destined to take a foremost place in the illustrious roll-call of his order, was coming into notice, though still young. It was Jeremiah.[1] Like Ezekiel, the son of a priest, he was born at Anathoth,[2] a small village on the main road,[3] about three miles north of Jerusalem, in the tribe of Benjamin.[4] It lay on a gentle height overlooking the upland plains, amidst a landscape which must have kindled the eye and roused the heart of the future prophet. The famous hills of Benjamin—Nob, Gibea of Saul—Mizpeh—Gibeon, Ramah, and Geba, rose in a half circle, to the west and north-west, at different points, nearer or farther off. To the east he could see, from the flat roof of his father's house, the chasm and plains of the Jordan, with the mountains of Gilead, high beyond. On the south-east, at the feet of the purple hills of Moab, lay the blue waters of the sea of Lot,[5] while towards the north, close to the

[1] Jeremiah = Jehovah rejects. *Klein.* Jehovah establishes. *Dietrich.* See for a full notice of the name, Herzog, *R. E.*, vol. vi. p. 478. [2] Jer. i. 29, 27. [3] Isa. x. 30.

[4] Josh. xxi. 18. 1 Kings ii. 26. 1 Chron. vi. 45. Neh. xi. 32.

[5] The name for the Dead Sea among the Bedouins of the present day.

village, a green valley reached away to the lofty northern side of the present Wady Sulem.[1]

The testimony of Jeremiah corroborates the dark picture given by Zephaniah, of the moral and religious condition of Judah, when he began his ministrations. For more than seventy-five years, Assyria had given but little trouble, for the campaigns of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal, against Phenicia and Egypt, were only brief episodes in the long peace, and Manasseh, though for a time treated harshly, had been restored to his throne. Egypt under Psammetichus I. did not molest the Hebrews, the siege of Ashdod occupying her, as we have seen, for twenty-nine years. Judah was now rich and prosperous, but heathenism and moral corruption flourished in proportion. Josiah had been twelve years on the throne when Jeremiah, in B.C. 627, received his Divine commission as prophet, but the gods of Judah were still as numerous as her cities,[2] and impiety was so rampant that it seemed vain to look for an upright or honest man;[3] small and great were bent only on making money; prophet and priest used deceit.[4]

Gentle, sensitive, and yielding, Jeremiah seemed ill-fitted for the office of a true prophet in such times. It offered only the most uninviting and dangerous prospect. He might count on bitter mockery and insult.[5] Though urged to even the harshest parts of his duty, by the sincerest patriotism and love for his fellow-countrymen, he was certain to meet with such misapprehension and contradiction, that the loneliest wilderness would seem a relief, in its quiet and security.[6] Yearning for peace and love; averse by nature from strife and controversy; fidelity

[1] Furrer's *Palästina*, pp. 76, 77. Kiepert's *Map*.
[2] Jer. ii. 28; xi. 13. [3] Jer. v. 1–5. [4] Jer. vi. 13.
[5] Jer. xx. 7. [6] Jer. ix. 1.

to his mission would evidently force him to stand up as the accuser of his neighbours as a whole, and make him a second Ishmael—himself against every one, and every one against him. Nor could he fail to see that, like his predecessors, he would appear a public enemy and traitor to many, by having to denounce political measures on which they had set their hearts; such as the alliance with Egypt, in opposition to Assyria.[1] But, with the full consciousness that acceptance of the prophetic office implied all this and more—the clouding his life by abiding troubles, the loss of all that most men count gain, the imminent risk of martyrdom crowning a career of humiliation and bitterness—his sense of duty impelled him to brave whatever it might bring, when the voice of his Heavenly Master summoned him to His service.

Like Isaiah,[2] he has left us an account of his consecration to his high dignity. It took place, we know not under what circumstances, or where, in the thirteenth year of Josiah, while the prophet was still a very young man;[3] its every detail stamping itself on his memory with a vividness, fresh as ever, even in long subsequent years, when his authority to speak for Jehovah had been vindicated by the fulfilment of his gloomiest predictions of the fate of Jerusalem, and of the deportation of his race.[4] The word of Jehovah, he tells us, came to him—doubtless in a vision, the result of high mental excitement and preoccupation with the spiritual interests of his people—and seemed to say to him, in the silence of his bosom, as if with articulate words:—

"Before I formed thee in the womb [5] I knew thee, and before thou camest into the world I consecrated thee, and

[1] Hengstenberg's *Christology*, vol. ii. p. 370.
[2] Isa. vi. [3] Jer. i. 6.
[4] Jer. i. 3. [5] Jer. i. 4–16.

destined thèe for a prophet to the nations." There must have been a spiritual fitness in the young man to make such an intimation to him possible; an intense sympathy with the old religion, and an all-mastering enthusiasm for its revival. It must, indeed, have become the engrossing thought of his heart to rouse his country to loyalty to Jehovah, and to warn them of the terrible danger and wickedness of their idolatry, and disobedience to the moral law given them from heaven. But he was still young, and shrank from the open assumption of an office so weighty as that of a prophet, though already one in his heart. "Alas, O Lord Jehovah," said he, "I know not how to speak; I am too young." But strength was to be made perfect in weakness. "Say not, 'I am too young,'" replied the Voice: "for thou shalt go to all to whom I shall send thee, and thou shalt say all that I command thee. Be not afraid of them; for I am with thee, to deliver thee, says Jehovah."

Then it appeared in the vision as if Jehovah put forth His hand, and touched his lips,[1] saying as He did so: "See, I have put My words in thy mouth. Behold, I this day appoint thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to tear down; to destroy and to overthrow; to build up, and plant."[2] He might still, however, have hesitated, in his humility; assurances, therefore, were added that he would not be left unsupported by God. A shoot of an almond tree—known by the Hebrews as "the waker," from being the earliest of all trees to *wake* from the sleep of winter—as if it had *watched* for spring—rose before him. "So," said Jehovah, "shall I be *wakeful* and *watchful* over my word,

[1] Isa. vi. 7.

[2] The evil was to be destroyed; the good, taking its place, to be planted and built up.

to carry it out." A boiling pot, its steam and smoke blowing southwards from the north, then appeared, and forthwith the Divine Voice continued:—

"Out of the North the evil I have predicted by others, and will predict by you, will flame forth[1] upon all the inhabitants of this land. For I am about to call hither all the races of the northern kingdoms; and they shall come, and raise, each, his throne, at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all her walls, round about, and against all the towns of Judah. And then will I deliver my sentence upon them for all their wickedness, because they have forsaken Me, and burnt incense to foreign gods, and paid homage to the works of their own hands."

"Now, therefore,[2] gird thy loins, as a man does when he braces himself to action,[3] and stand up, and speak to them all that I command thee: be not dismayed before them, lest I make thee so indeed, by withdrawing from thee My protection. But I, even I, make thee, to-day, strong as a fortress-town, or as an iron pillar, or as walls of brass, against the whole land, its kings, its princes, its priests, and its people. They shall indeed fight against you, but they will not overcome you; for I am with you, says Jehovah, to deliver you."

From this time, through forty years, most of them years of national misfortune, gradually darkening into utter ruin and exile, the recollection of this solemn "call" dwelt with the prophet as a constant summons to fidelity in his high office, and an encouragement and support amidst all its trials. During that long ministry, carried on chiefly in Jerusalem, no personal danger, no consideration of personal interest, comfort, or ease, no shrinking from ridicule, contumely, or hatred, could turn him from the task imposed on him with such awful sanctions, by the lips of the Eternal Himself. His tender and sensitive nature might for the moment shrink from the mortifications and perils of his commission, but the

[1] *Sept.* [2] Jer. i. 17–19. [3] Ps. xix. 5.

Divine command, as he tells us, glowed like a burning fire in his heart, and he could not be silent.[1] Wherever he could meet his fellows, his voice was lifted up for his Master—in the courts of the temple,[2] at the gates of the city,[3] in the king's palace,[4] in prison,[5] in private houses,[6] in the open country around Jerusalem;[7] anywhere, indeed, as circumstances demanded, or opportunity offered.

The earliest of his utterances which has come down to us, dates, apparently, from the first year of his commission, B.C. 627; the thirteenth year of Josiah. It is an earnest denunciation of his fellow-countrymen for their refusal to keep aloof from Egypt and Assyria, and follow the prophets alone, as mouthpieces of Jehovah, their rightful king. Political factions in Jerusalem demanded alliance with one or other of the great powers of the day; one party seeking a league with Egypt against Assyria; another, close relations with Assyria against Egypt. Jeremiah, on the contrary, urged that both were wrong; that Judah ought to have no such foreign relations; that, as the people of God, it should keep itself isolated from heathenism. Religion and politics were only different names for the same thing in the eyes of Jeremiah, as indeed they ought to be to us all. To his fellow-citizens he was the head of a third party in public life, urging his own political views. But to him, alliance with a heathen nation was felt to be equivalent to adopting their idolatry, as, indeed, had been already proved only too fully.

Recalling the happy time when their ancestors were

[1] Jer. xx. 9.
[2] Jer. vii. 2; xxvi. 1.
[3] Jer. xvii. 9.
[4] Jer. xxii. 1; xxvii. 17.
[5] Jer. xxxii. 1.
[6] Jer. xviii. 2.
[7] Jer. xix. 1.

still faithful to Jehovah, in the youth of the nation, while it was still in the wilderness, he begins:

The word of Jehovah,[1] has come to me, with the command: Go and call out loud in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus says Jehovah, I remember favourably the kindness of thy youth; the love of thy time of betrothal, when thou followedst me in the wilderness; in a land unsown. Israel, as the bride of Jehovah, was consecrated, and sacred to Him;—His first fruits;—in contrast to the nations at large, what the holy sheaf of first fruits, waved before Him at the solemn feast, and forbidden to be touched by profane lips—is to the common growth of the field.[2] All who eat these sacred fruits commit sacrilege, and so did all who touched; Israel, Jehovah's firstfruits of the nations. Evil befel them! says Jehovah.

But though thus betrothed to God, and loved by Him as His bride, Israel had been unfaithful to Him.

Hear the word of Jehovah,[4] O House of Jacob, and all the clans of the House of Israel![5] Thus, says Jehovah, What wrongdoing did your fathers find in Me, that they went far from Me, and

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[1] **Jer. ii. 1–3.** Knobel thinks this discourse was delivered in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim. *Prophetismus*, vol. ii. p. 272. Graf that it was spoken in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, or, at least, written down then. But it clearly suits the date assigned it in the text, which is adopted by Hitzig, Ewald, Naegelsbach and Keil, and J. D. Michaelis, among others.

[2] The rite of the first fruits thus alluded to is laid down Exod. xxiii. 16, 19; xxxiv. 22, 26; in Lev. xxiii. 10–14; Num. xviii. 12; xxviii. 26; Deut. xxvi. 1. The books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers must, therefore, have been known to Jeremiah, for Deuteronomy, even in the opinion of the newer criticism, was not yet discovered when this prophecy was delivered. These books could not then be a literary forgery of the time after the Exile, as some venture to assert.

[3] Or, devoured.

[4] **Jer. ii. 4–6.**

[5] The whole nation is meant.

walked after vanity[1]—that is, idolatry—and became foolish? Saying no longer, "Where is Jehovah, who brought us up from the land of Egypt, and led us in the wilderness; in a land of barren desert and pit-like rifts and clefts; a land of waterless plains, and of gorges dark as the shadow of death; a land through which no one passes, and where no man dwells?"

Yet, in spite of this,[2] I brought you to a Carmel-land, a land of gardens, and gave you its fruit, and its richness, to eat. But when ye entered it ye defiled the land, and made My inheritance—the land that belongs to Me—an abomination. The priests said not "Where is Jehovah?" and those who handled the Law[3]

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[1] Vanity, Heb. Hebel = a breath, a thing empty and worthless—hence, an idol.

[2] Jer. ii. 7-11.

[3] That is, occupied themselves with it, as a reaper with his sickle; a boatman with his oar; a player with his pipe; etc. See the verb Taphas, in the Hebrew Lexicons.

This passage shows that Jeremiah believed that the Law was as old as the early forefathers of his race. Some critics try to evade this demonstration by saying that by the Law or Torah, is meant, "not a book, but an oral decision," though how the priests could "handle an oral, or spoken decision," is not easy to imagine. It is granted, indeed, that the office of the priest is here said to be "to handle the Law." *Bible in Jewish Church*, p. 295. That the word Torah should be gravely said to mean "oral decisions," except in the same way, and with the same limitations, as in the case of a barrister, or a judge, giving in some special case his idea of the meaning of the law—is a phenomenon of perverted criticism, for even where such decisions are given they assume the existence of the formal written law of which they are the supposed expression. It is alleged in support of this theory, that Micah (iii. 11) "complains that the priests give Torahs, or legal decisions, for hire." But the word Torah is not in the verse! It is the hiphil imperf. of yara(h) to throw, to throw out—hence, to teach, to instruct. The word Torah comes from it as much as our "law" comes from "to lay"—"to lay down," with a possible ultimate reference to the Greek "lego" "to arrange," "to say," "to utter" (as an oracle may). But was the Greek "Law" only an utterance of oracles or decisions, on chance

knew me not; these, the shepherds of My people, fell away from Me, and the prophets prophesied in the name of Baal, and went after worthless idols.

Therefore I will still further plead the matter with you, saith Jehovah, and with your sons' sons will I plead it. Pass over to the island of Cyprus,[1] and to the other coasts of the Greeks, on the west, and see; send to Kedar, in Arabia, on the east, and mark well, and notice, if the like has happened with them as with you? Has any people changed gods, though their gods be no gods really.[2] But my people have changed Me, their glory, for worthless idols!

Be dumb with astonishment, O heavens[3] at this! shudder with terror; be ye utterly amazed! says Jehovah. For My people have committed a double sin; they have forsaken Me, the Fountain of Living Water, and have dug out for themselves poor underground cisterns, full of rents; that can hold no water![4]

Was Israel, the Northern kingdom, a servant of thine, O Jehovah, worshipping thee—Thy slave—or, still closer, was he not a son of Thy house?[5] Why, then, was he left to be spoiled by

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questions of the moment? The Hebrew priest could explain the law on a point, but he could not make it. It would be as reasonable to say that because the lawyers give decisions "for hire," such decisions are all that is meant when we speak of the Law of England.

[1] Its capital was Citium = Chittim. *Herzog*, vol. iii. p. 215.

[2] A prominent critic quotes this text to prove that Jehovah gave Himself out only as a local god, like the idols themselves. *Bible in Jewish Church*, p. 27. But the matter may be left to any unprejudiced reader. There is not a hint of any such thought in the words.

[3] Jer. ii. 12-16.

[4] *Land and Book*, p. 287. The ground in and round the cities of Palestine is honeycombed with huge subterranean water pits, or cisterns. The mouth is narrow; the sides smooth with cement; the shape like a huge demi-john.

[5] This is substantially the rendering of this very difficult passage, given by Eichhorn and then by Hitzig. It seems to me the best. The sense adopted by Naegelsbach and Keil—"Is Israel a slave and not free," etc.—"It would seem as if he were

the Assyrians? The young lions[1] roared against him; they lifted

regarded by God as such, else he would not be left to such misery" —seems artificial. Rosenmüller's rendering (Scholia in *Vet. Test. Jerem. Vatic.*, vol. i. p. 83) is as follows, borrowed from Ben Jarchi: "Who has caused that he whom God formerly called a son, and whom no one dared touch with impunity, is now a slave—he who, if treated badly by others was not thus used by his Lord, who pitied him as a father pities his children." I don't understand this. "A slave of Jehovah" is a very common phrase in the Bible for His servant or worshipper, *e.g.* 1 Kings viii. 66, "David His slave." So xi. 13–32; xxxiv. 36–38; xiv. 8. In fact, to call oneself the slave of another was, and still is, in the East, a very usual form of speech from a lower to a higher. Barzillai calls himself David's slave, 2 Sam. xix. 37. Zimri is the slave of Elah, king of Israel, 1 Kings xvi. 9. Obadiah is the slave of Elijah, 1 Kings xviii. 9, and so on. Moses is constantly called the slave of God, 1 Kings viii. 53–56, etc. The ordinary idea of service, in fact, was that of a slave; the Hebrews knowing nothing else in common life. Slaves were of two kinds: those bought from without or taken in war; and children born in the household, who were nearer to their master than the others, and more jealously protected. I should, by the way, have said that Graf translates the words above—"Israel is given up to plunder, as if he were a slave or one born in the house." Calvin's rendering is in effect that of Jarchi, adopted by Rosenmüller. Reuss translates it, "Is he a slave who may be *sold* to his enemies? Is he not rather an adopted son; or, still more, a loved spouse?"

[1] The lion must have been very common in Palestine, as there are no fewer than seven words used for it in the O. T. (1) Ari or Aryeh, denoting the beast in general, without reference to age or sex. (2) Kepheer, the word in the text—the lion or, specially, the young lion, Jud. xiv. 5; Job iv. 10; Ezek. xix. 2. (3) Labi, a grown lion, or (labiya) lioness, Gen. xlix. 9; Num. xxiii. 24; xxiv. 9; Jer. xix. 2; Nah. ii. 11. Used to imply the dignity and strength of the animal at its best. (4) Laish, with the same meaning, Prov. xxx. 30; the capital of Northern Dan got its name from the word. (5) Shahatz, meaning much the same, Job xxviii. 8. (6) Gar, or Gor, a cub. (7) Shahal, a vigorous lion, Job. iv. 10; Ps. xci. 13. See vol. iii. pp. 7, 129.

up their voice; they laid his land waste; his cities were destroyed[1] and left without an inhabitant. In the same way, as Assyria did to Israel, the Egyptians, the sons of Memphis and Tahapanes,[2] have broken thy head, O Judah![3] Hast thou not brought this on thyself[4] by thy having forsaken Jehovah, thy God, when he was leading thee in the right way,[5] urging thee by His prophets to have no relations with the heathen nations round? What, therefore, hast thou to do, now, with the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of the Nile?[6] Or what hast thou to do with the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the Great River,[7] instead of keeping to Jehovah, the Fountain of Living Water?[8] Thine own wickedness will punish thee, and thy defections from Me shall

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[1] So Ewald, Hitzig, Graf, "burned." Mühlau and Volck, Keil, "broken down." Sept.

[2] The Daphnæ of the Greeks. A frontier town in Egypt, 16 miles south of Pelusium; Brugsch's *Map*. Psammetichus had a strong garrison in it. Indignant at his employing Greek mercenaries, they at one time revolted, and marched off with the rest of the native Egyptian army, to Syene in the far south. *Dict. of Geog.*

[3] Psammetichus being so long engaged in the siege of Ashdod, it is quite likely that raiding attacks from his army thus employed, are referred to. Yet this verse seems to point to a date after the fall of Josiah. So uncertain is the order of the various prophecies. [4] Jer. ii. 17-19. [5] Jer. ii. 17.

[6] Heb., Shihor; *Sept.* Gēon. Shihor = black, referring to the troubled waters of the Nile, discoloured by the alluvial mud it brings with it from the far south. The word Gēon, or Gihon, is used by the *Sept.* from the belief that the Nile was the same as Gihon, one of the four rivers of Paradise. See vol. i. p. 111.

[7] The Euphrates. This verse refers to political action, taken in Josiah's minority, to form leagues with Egypt and Assyria, no doubt with the idea of keeping the secret from each country of any intrigues with the other. The same course had been followed in the Northern Kingdom before its fall. See vol. iv. p. 265. Hos. xii. 1.

[8] The water of the Euphrates needs to stand till it clears, before it can be used, and it is then strained through a cloth, to keep back its hurtful sediment. *Rosenmüller*, vol. iv. p. 267.

chastise thee. Know, therefore, and see how evil and bitter it is to forsake Jehovah, thy God, and that My fear is not in thee, saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts.

## Israel has from of old been unfaithful, and has persisted in going after idols.

For from long past times [1] thou hast broken thy yoke and burst thy bonds [2]—the bonds of Thy covenant with me, made at Sinai—and hast said "I will not serve Jehovah," [3] and on every high hill and under every green tree thou hast laid thyself down to play the harlot. Yet I planted thee as a noble vine [4] of a pure stock; how hast thou turned into degenerate shoots of a foreign worthless vine, to me? Yea, though thou wash thee with natron,[5] and take much soap,[6] thine iniquity remains black [7] before me, says the Lord Jehovah,

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[1] Jer. ii. 20-24.

[2] The *Sept.*, *Vulg.*, *Hitzig*, *Graf*, and *Keil*, read "Thou" for "I."

[3] "Transgress," in the A.V. is undoubtedly a later reading, from the very slight change of a Heb. "d" for an "r," the two letters being almost identical in appearance. The Masoretic note reads the word as I have rendered it.

[4] Soraik, a specially prized vine, supposed to be the same as that which in Morocco is now called Serki, and in Persia Kishmish, with small round dark berries and soft stones. Niebuhr, *Descript. de l'Arabie*, p. 147.

[5] Nether. A *mineral* alkali gathered from the famous natron lakes in Egypt, 60 miles W.N.W. of Cairo. Natron is an impure form of soda. About 300 persons are still employed in collecting it from the edges of the pools or lakes. It is used in the East, with oil, as a substitute for soap.

[6] Borith. A *vegetable* alkali obtained from the ashes of alkaline plants which flourish in the salt marshes of the coasts of Palestine and also on the shores of the Dead Sea. The various species of Salicornia and Salsola are mostly used, and an active trade in the potash made by burning them is still carried on. The manufacture is very like that of alkali from the burning of kelp on the coasts of Ireland and Scotland. A soft soap, made by boiling olive oil with potash, is now used; oil being cheaper than tallow. Tristram's *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 481; *Land and Book*, p. 532.

[7] Lit., "is written." *Sept.*, "still thou art stained by thine iniquities," etc.

How durst thou say, "I am not polluted; I have not gone after the Baals?"[1] See thy doings in the valley of Hinnom, where thou burnest thy children to Moloch[2]; take knowledge of what thou hast done; thou light-footed camel-filly, running madly hither and thither in thy heat; thou art like a she wild-ass, used to the wilderness, which in the fierceness of her desire sniffs up the wind, and can be turned back by none in her season. They that seek the she-camel need not weary themselves by running after her. In her month they will find her with the he-camels of the herd; Judah is mad after idols—you will find her beside them.

"O Judah," says Jehovah,[3] "run not thus insanely after false gods, till thy feet are bare and thy throat parched with thirst!"[4] But thou answerest: "It is useless speaking. No! I love strange peoples and strange gods, and I *will* go after them."

As a thief is ashamed when he is caught,[5] so is the House of Israel[6] ashamed—they, their kings, their princes, their priests and their prophets—at being found saying to a block of wood, "Thou art my father," and to a block of stone, "Thou hast brought me forth." For they have turned their backs and not their faces to Me. But in the time of their trouble they will say to Me, "Up, and save us!"

Jehovah will then, however, refuse to help them.

Where, then,[7] are thy gods that thou hast made for thyself? Let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble!

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[1] It seems almost too horrible to believe, but it is the fact, that the newer criticism classes Jehovah among the Baals followed by Israel. "The Baalim," that is "the Baals," for Baalim is the Heb. word in the text—"the Baalim were local symbols of Jehovah," says a recent critic!! *Prophets of Israel*, p. 175.

[2] 2 Kings xxiii. 10. Jer. vii. 31, 32, 35. Moloch = Baal. Jer. vii. 35; xix. 5. Hos. ii. 10.

[3] Jer. ii. 25-27.

[4] Hitzig understands the bare feet to have reference to the leaping barefoot in the sacred dances round the altars of Baal, and the parched throat, of the effect of the continuous calling on the god. 1 Kings xviii. 26.

[5] Lit., "found." [6] = Judah. [7] Jer. ii. 28.

For as many as are thy towns, so many are thy gods, O Judah,[1] and as many as the streets of Jerusalem, are the altars to Baal.[2]

Since the whole people have apostatized, and no chastisement or warning from the prophets has had any effect, they cannot justly complain if God give them up to the sorest judgments. The apostasy has had no excuse; it has been a sin without parallel as without cause.

Why[3] do ye murmur at My threatenings, and talk against Me for them? You have all played foul with Me, says Jehovah. I have smitten your sons in vain; they have not accepted the correction; your sword, like a destroying lion, has devoured your prophets.[4] O evil generation that ye are, mark for yourselves the word of Jehovah! Have I been unfruitful, like a wilderness, to Israel: a land of thick darkness,[5] as they say of the pathless desert, in which men wander without guidance, hopelessly, as if in deep night? Why, then, say My people, "We shall go where we like; we shall come no more to Thee?" Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her showy sashes?[6] But My people—My bride, have forgotten Me for days without number!

Yet what had this license and unfaithfulness gained for them? They had only learned heathen wickedness, as seen in the persecution and martyrdom of the prophets and the followers of Jehovah.

Why speedest thou thy way,[7] to seek love?[8] Thou hast thus

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[1] The god of one town had no respect from the people of another, and was regarded as powerless outside his own narrow sphere. It is still so in Ceylon. Knox's *Ceylon*, p. 161.

[2] *Sept.*

[3] Jer. ii. 29-32.

[4] In the martyrdoms of Manasseh's time.

[5] Lit., "of the darkness of Jehovah."

[6] Girdles or belts, as ornaments.

[7] "Makest comely thy ways."

[8] Jer. ii. 33-37.

accustomed thyself[1] to evil deeds.[2] The heart's blood of guiltless sufferers—the prophets[3] and the godly—is found on the skirt of thy robe. Thou didst not catch them breaking in, as thieves, to thy house, else killing them would have been innocent.[4] But through the iniquity learned by all thy idolatrous ways, has blood been shed. Yet thou sayest, "Indeed I am innocent; His anger is turned away from me; no evil has fallen upon me since Manasseh's day."

Jehovah, however, protests against this—

Behold, I will try the matter with thee, because thou sayest "I have not sinned." Why art thou so eager to change thy policy,[5] O Judah? Thou shalt be brought to shame by thy new alliance with Egypt, as thou wast, in the past, by thy old alliance with Assyria.[6] Yea, thou shalt come back from this coquetting with Pharaoh,[7] thine hand clasped over thy head in token of trouble and sorrow,[8] for Jehovah despises those in whom thou trustest, and thou shalt not prosper in thy relations with them. For He says,[9] "If a man divorce his wife, and she go from him and become the wife of another man, can the first husband take her back to be his wife again?[10] Is not that wife hopelessly polluted? And when the land of Judah, the bride of Jehovah, leaves Him and makes alliance with Egypt and Assyria, is not that land utterly polluted? But thou, Judah, committest sin with many lovers, and yet thinkest thou, thus living in impurity, to return to me?"[11]

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[1] Lit., "thy ways."

[2] Copying the vices and violence of the heathen. *Ewald. Hitzig. Graf. Keil.* [3] Verse 30.

[4] So, by the Law. Exod. xxii. 2. Jeremiah must have thus known Exodus. [5] Lit., "way."

[6] See 2 Chron. xxviii. 21; Isa. vii. 8.

[7] Nothing is known of overtures to Egypt on the part of Josiah, but it is quite possible that the heathen party, after Manasseh had been carried off to Babylon, may have inclined to Egypt for the time, since under Psammetichus it was rising fast into a great power, once more. [8] 2 Sam. xiii. 19.

[9] Jer. iii. 1. [10] Deut. xxiv. 1–4.

[11] So, in effect Ewald, Keil, Streane, Sachs, De Wette, Noyes.

God has good reason to speak thus, and to refuse to acknowledge Judah as His bride any longer.

Lift up thine eyes[1] to the treeless hills, and see where thou hast not been dishonoured. Thou hast sat by the wayside, like a harlot, to catch passers by, as the Arab lurks in the desert, to plunder wayfarers,[2] and thou hast polluted the land by thy lewdness and thy wickedness.[3] For this reason showers have been withheld from you, and there has been no latter rain.[4] But though I thus sent drought on thee, to make thee consider and turn from thy evil ways, thou hast had a harlot's forehead, and hast refused to be ashamed. Nay, dost thou not even now cry to Me,[5] "My Father! Thou art the spouse of my youth! Will He keep His anger for ever? Will He bear ill will against me, time without end?" Thou speakest thus, indeed, but still doest evil, ay, and art set on doing it!

Such a discourse throws striking light on the position claimed by the Jewish prophets. As the representative of Jehovah, the theocratic king, Jeremiah assumes the right to demand that the state shall follow his counsels, and not that of any political party, or even of the king, if he opposed them. And as he interferes peremptorily in the foreign politics of the nation, we shall find him not less actively interfering in all internal questions—

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[1] Jer. iii. 2–5.

[2] Judah has been eager after idolatry. The allusion here is apparently, to the setting up heathen altars at the corners of the streets and at the city gates, 2 Kings xxiii. 8; Ezek. xvi. 25. The desert Arabs have in all ages been the same. See *Diod. Sic.*, ii. 48. Plin., *Hist. Nat.*, vi. 28.

[3] In shedding the blood of the prophets and martyrs. Chap. ii. 30, 34.

[4] See vol. iv. p. 203.

[5] Lit., "From now on." Chr. B. Michaelis points with acuteness to this expression, as showing the words to have been spoken at the beginning of Josiah's reformation, which commenced in the twelfth year of that prince's reign.

the size of estates, the low wages of the labourer, the rate of interest taken, the morals of priests and prophets, the violence of the lawless among the nobles, and whatever else, for the time, was a prominent evil in the community. He never speaks, moreover, as a mere adviser, but always commands obedience to his words as really those of Jehovah. He thus claims supreme, undisputed, authority in the state; over its politics, morals, and public and private life. Except under a theocracy, such a state of things would be unendurable. Were any man to claim it nowadays, he would speedily find himself ridiculous. But the prophet, speaking for God, and armed with His incontrovertible authority, was an essential characteristic of a state of things when God was the true king, and the reigning monarch only His deputy. The duly authorized prophet, in that case, must be paramount in the state, as the messenger from the supreme authority, delivering its commands. It is to be noticed, moreover, that Jeremiah, and his order at large, care nothing for politics simply as such; seek no position for themselves, among the officials of the state, but treat all questions only in their religious bearing. They aim at no more than to keep Israel from idolatry, as treason against Jehovah; to root it out, so far as it has been introduced; and to bring about a moral reform in the nation, by restoring hearty obedience to the Divine Law, in its relations between man and God, and man and his neighbour. Their voice, in fact, was that of ideal loyalty to heaven and to their brethren, and as such was the only true wisdom; the wisdom which no state can venture to forget save at its certain peril.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE BEGINNING OF THE REFORMATION UNDER JOSIAH.

ROUSED by the earnest preaching of Zephaniah and Jeremiah, and, it may be, by secret friends of the ancient faith in the palace, Josiah had openly shown a religious bias, from the eighth year of his reign, when he was sixteen, the age at which Hebrew kings attained their majority. Some members of noble families, like Baruch, and his brother Seraiah,[1] who held office at court at a later date, were early won to the cause of Jehovah; if, indeed, they had not always been true to him. Subsequent notices of them show that, like Jeremiah, they must have been in their early manhood when they allied themselves with the prophet, but their sincerity was proved by a lifelong fidelity to him, when to show it was full of danger. Maaseiah, also, the governor of Jerusalem,[2] joined the party of the old religion; with Hilkiah, the high priest,[3] Hanameel, the cousin of the prophet,[4] Shallum, the keeper of the priestly vestments, and his wife,[5] Huldah, who, as late as the eighteenth year of

[1] Jos., *Ant.*, X. vi. 2. Baruch i. 1. Jer. xxxvi. 4, 10, 32.
[2] 2 Chron. xxxiv. 8.
[3] 2 Kings xxii. 4. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 9. 1 Esdr. i. 8.
[4] Jer. xxxii. 7, 44.
[5] The Sept. says she was his mother. 2 Kings xxii. 14.

Josiah, held the foremost place in Jerusalem, for her prophetic gifts, though Jeremiah had then been preaching for five years. Such a group formed the centre of a religious party, powerful in influence, if not in numbers, and strengthening the hands of the king in his projects of reform.

These could only, however, be slowly carried out, in the face of a depraved public opinion, slow to acquiesce in such changes. Idolatry had been the state-religion for nearly seventy years, so that the existing generation knew nothing, or next to nothing, of the faith of their fathers. Even the existence of the sacred "Book of the Law" seems to have been well nigh forgotten, though it had been taught throughout Judah in the reign of Jehoshaphat, nearly three hundred years before,[1] and Jehoiada had laid it on the head of Jehoash at his coronation,[2] in accordance with the command in Deuteronomy,[3] two hundred and fifty years previously.[4] Nor was this wonderful, for all copies of it had doubtless been destroyed, as far as possible, during Manasseh's reign. The corruption of the priesthood, and of the great body of the prophets, had deepened the spiritual ignorance thus entailed, and confirmed the nation in its apostasy. A return to the religious ideas of the reign of David, which was the ideal of the godly Hebrew, was hence necessarily slow. Steps were taken to repair the temple, and its connected buildings, the first being to collect the necessary funds. Nearly two hundred and fifty years before, the whole fabric had been restored under Jehoash, but since then it had become sorely dilapidated by time and

[1] Jehoshaphat, B.C. 917. [2] 2 Kings xi. 12.

[3] Deut. xvii. 18. This is to be noted as a hint respecting the age of that book.

[4] Jehoash, B.C. 877.

violence. Some of the kings had deliberately pulled down portions, to build their idolatrous high places and altars; rents showed themselves in the walls and roofs; the timber work was decayed; the gold or bronze decorations had been in part stripped off, and the courts despoiled of their sacred equipments.[1] But it was no longer possible to obtain funds by the contributions of worshippers alone, as had been done in the days of Jehoiada.[2] The high officials who had charge of the temple gates were, therefore, sent through the whole land to collect contributions, not only in Judah, but over the old territory of the Ten Tribes, in which some Hebrew communities still lingered.[3] The prejudice that had kept these from joining heartily with Hezekiah in a similar movement,[4] two generations before, had disappeared in the century which had nearly elapsed since his messengers had been sent out with a general invitation to them, to come to Jerusalem, to the passover. The calves of Bethel and Dan had been long ago carried off by the Assyrians,[5] but though replaced by images of Baal, and by Asherahs, the sympathy of common blood, now, at last, disposed the survivors of the Northern Kingdom to seek religious reunion with Judah, as the Samaritans did, from other motives, at a later day. Josiah, moreover, bore himself as king of the undivided nation, including all its twelve tribes, having apparently taken advantage of the decline of Assyria, to occupy the northern territory as far as he could. It seems probable, indeed, that in his zeal to restore the ancient glory of David, he had even attacked the small nations round—Edom, Moab, and Ammon—who had been tributary to the Jews. Thus

[1] 2 Chron. xxxiv. 11. 2 Kings xxii. 5, 6.
[2] 2 Kings xii. 4, 9.
[3] 2 Chron. xxxiv. 9.
[4] 2 Chron. xxx. 10.
[5] Hos. x. 5.

only, perhaps, can their subsequent inveterate bitterness, when Judah was in trouble, be explained.

While, however, the king, a young man of twenty-one, was feeling his way to a restoration of Jehovah-worship, Jeremiah, who was apparently about the same age, and had just been "called,"[1] was far from sharing any great expectations from the changes that might be made. They seemed to him only outward. The moral condition of the people he regarded as terribly depraved, and he felt that even if outward conformity to the Law were restored, the heart of the multitude was still wedded to heathenism.

Such convictions, as was natural, reacted on the character of his utterances. Having to address audiences whose religious instincts had become perverted; mere rites and outward acts taking the place of the inner spiritual life demanded by Jehovah; conscience, moreover, being asleep, if not dead,—refinements of language were laid aside, and clear and direct address took their place. Neglecting the beauties of rhetoric, or the measured rhythm common in the discourses of his order, he spoke mostly in earnest but simple prose, with only occasionally a higher flight. Some prophets might feel it most suitable to veil the future in vivid metaphor, or might speak in general terms of the approach of an awful day of Jehovah; the herald of a brighter Messianic era to follow; but Jeremiah, like Isaiah, and even more completely than he, preferred to use the simplest language; announcing his predictions, from month to month and year to year, with wondrous preciseness, and leaving no room for question respecting their future fulfilment. He wished to give no excuse for any one saying, that

[1] In the thirteenth year of Josiah.

"the days would pass, and the visions remain unfulfilled," or to mock at his words as dealing only with distant and far-off times.[1] He spoke, therefore, of the future as one who saw its events with perfect distinctness, not like the scenery of dreams. Living in communion with the world around him, he used no riddles or parables, but painted the times to come as if they were present. Simplicity and directness were his supreme aims; if by any means he might win the popular heart for Jehovah.

From the moment of his receiving the Divine commission, all natural shyness and timidity had left him. His first oration, already given, shows the word of Jehovah, to use his own language, glowing in him like fire, and beating in his breast like an iron hammer.[2] Like a mirror, or a clear pool, his spirit reflected every detail of the lights and shadows falling on it from above. He might be naturally gentle and desponding, but as a prophet he knew no fear. Godly from his youth, he detested the falsehood, hypocrisy, and corruption around him, and denounced them with a noble sincerity, which no thought of self disturbed or weakened. His priestly relations must have won him social respect, for not only his father, but his connections were sacerdotal. But he suffered, as all true-hearted men must ever suffer, when truth and godliness assail hollow formality, and vested interest in wrong. The priests at Anathoth, his native village, ere long hated him intensely. He was too much in earnest for them. Like many in our own day, who should know better, they wished to keep things smooth; to let abuses remain undisturbed, and thus avoid trouble; and to content themselves with an outward propriety, unruffled by any breath of zeal or en-

[1] Ezek. xii. 22–25, 27, 28. [2] Jer. xxiii. 29.

thusiasm. In their snug benefices, they, with most of their brethren over the land, resented change or reform in Church or State, and wanted no Methodism such as he preached. He drew his inspiration, therefore, under God, not from his brethren, but from a nobler source. Deeply read in the Law, and in the old prophets, he had stored his mind with their thoughts, their style, and even their words, till he often unconsciously repeated them. Drinking at such pure fountains, his soul was filled with lofty thoughts of God, of morality, of the past of Israel, and of its future destiny, and he had learned to abhor the lies of all kinds flourishing around him, alike in sacred and secular life, and to denounce them with an energy that infuriated those who throve on them, but gained for him a posthumous homage from all succeeding generations of his race.

The second of his discourses preserved to us, must have been delivered very soon after the first. He had told Judah the terrible fate in store for them if they did not amend their ways, but they would not believe it possible that Jehovah would really cast them off. He reminds them, however, that their brethren of the Ten Tribes, part of the chosen people like themselves, had now for over ninety years been in exile. If they had been punished thus, why not Judah? But his heart sighed to think of any portion of his race being permanently separated from the rest. The troubles of Assyria, the rise of the Medes, and the breaking down of Asiatic kingdoms by the Scythians, may have kindled a fond hope that the Ten Tribes would ere long be brought back; knowing, as he did from Divine intimations, that penitence would restore to them the favour of Jehovah. All this expressed itself in his next utterance.

Have [1] you seen, he asked (speaking for God), what Israel, the kingdom of the Ten Tribes, the Rebellious One did? She *would* go up on every high hill and under every green tree, and there play the harlot. And I, Jehovah, thought, "After she has done all this, she will return to Me." But she did not return. And the Faithless One, her sister Judah, saw it—saw that for that special reason, because Israel, the Rebellious One, had committed adultery—that is, had given herself up to idols—I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; [2] and yet Judah, her sister, the Faithless One, was not afraid, but went and played the harlot also. And the result was that, though by the report of her lewdness, Israel had defiled the land, committing sin with idols of stone and of wood; yet, for all this, Judah, her sister, the Faithless One, though she has turned to Me outwardly in the reforms now begun by the king, has not turned to me with her whole heart, but with hollow insincerity,[3] says Jehovah.

Moreover, Jehovah has said to me [4]—Israel, the Rebellious, has shown herself to be more righteous than Judah the Faithless. Go, cry these words towards the northern countries to which Israel has been carried off, and say, Turn back, O Israel, the Rebellious, says Jehovah. I will not cause My face to fall [5] in dark looks on you; for I am merciful, says Jehovah. I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge your iniquity; for you have fallen away from Jehovah, your God, and roamed about after strange gods, under every green tree, and have not listened to my voice, says Jehovah. TURN BACK, ye rebellious sons, says Jehovah, for though I put you away, I am still your husband, and I will take you again if you acknowledge your iniquity—take you even if there be only one of a city, or two of a clan, thus penitent, and bring these back to Zion.[6] And I will give you, as many as thus return, shepherds after My own heart, like David of old; [7] princes who will reign in My fear, and feed or rule

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[1] Jer. iii. 6, 10-17. [2] Deut. xxiv. 1-4. [3] Lit., with a lie.
[4] Jer. iii. 11-17. [5] Gen. iv. 5.

[6] The presence of members of various tribes of the Northern Kingdom in Palestine so late as Christ's day, shows the fulfilment of this promise.

[7] 1 Sam. xiii. 14. Kings may have been called shepherds not only as "feeding" but as "defending" their people, for even now

you, their flock, wisely and with understanding. And when you have multiplied and grown fruitful in the land, in those days, says Jehovah, men will no longer speak of the Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah, nor will it even come into their thoughts; they will neither talk of it nor miss it, nor will another be made in its place; for I will establish a NEW COVENANT with you, in which the Ark will be superseded by a far grander manifestation of My glory than it could boast, though I was throned between the cherubim over it. For all Jerusalem will then be called the Throne of God. I will no more sit, unseen, in the Holy of Holies, but all the heathen nations will stream like a flood to the holy city,[1] to worship the name of Jehovah, then reigning gloriously and openly in it, and they will no longer follow the stubbornness of their wicked heart.[2]

The bitter rivalry between the Northern Kingdom and Judah had burned fiercely while they divided the land between them. But the misfortunes of the Ten Tribes had long ago extinguished ancient grudges and rivalries, and had roused intense sympathy, and brotherly longing for the restoration of the exiles, that the whole race might be once more united. Hosea had yearned for such a consummation,[3] though Samaria was still in its glory in his day. Isaiah had pictured a time when Ephraim would not vex Judah, nor Judah Ephraim, but both would live together as one people.[4] Ezekiel, also,

all shepherds in Palestine are armed to protect their charge from wild beasts or marauders. Bovet's *Egypt, etc.*, p. 248. See St. John x. 1–16. "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

[1] Jer. xvi. 19.

[2] In the restored kingdom of David, God will give Israel good kings, and being Himself present, there will be no further need of the Ark with its mere symbol of His presence, over the mercy seat, as hitherto. That venerable relic, however, was still in existence when Jeremiah spoke. See 2 Chron. xxxv. 3. But its loss in the approaching calamities of the city was prophetically unseen. There was no Ark in the Second Temple. 2 Macc. ii. 4 ff.

[3] Hos. i. 11.

[4] Isa. xi. 13, 14.

in a later day, was to brighten the vision of the future by similar anticipations,[1] for patriotism, next to loyalty to Jehovah, was a passion with the prophets in each generation. This golden time now rises before the eyes of Jeremiah.

In those days [2] the banished ones of the House of Judah will go hand in hand with the exiles of the House of Israel; they shall come, together, out of the Land of the North, to the land that I gave to your Fathers for an inheritance. As for Me, says Jehovah, I thought, of old, leading you from Egypt, how I would make you My sons, and give you a glorious land, a heritage, the noblest amongst the nations,[3] saying thus to myself, I will do so, if thou call Me, "My Father," and never wander from My steps. But, surely, as a wife is unfaithful to her husband, you have been faithless to Me, O House of Israel, says Jehovah.

Such tenderness on the part of God, it seems to the prophet, must rouse the guilty ones to repentance. Filled with this thought, he hears already, in the far distance, the wail of penitence from Israel.

A voice [4] sounds from the treeless hills: [5] the weeping and supplications of the sons of Israel, because they have turned aside from the right way, and have forgotten Jehovah, their God . . . . . .

But now, in the midst of this weeping, is heard the voice of God, Himself, moved to pity.

[1] Ezek. xxxvii. 16–22. [2] Jer. iii. 18–20.

[3] *Gesenius. Ewald. Hitzig. Graf. Keil. Eichhorn. Naegelsbach.* Eichhorn translates the former part of the verse: "I thought, on what condition could I give you the rights of sons, etc." "And determined thus—I will do it if they say to me 'My Father,' etc."

[4] Jer. iii. 21–25.

[5] The hills were the special places of prayer. Hos. iv. 13. Jer. iii. 2, 23; vii. 29. 2 Sam. xv. 32. Num. xxiii. 2. Zech. xii. 10, etc.

"Turn back, ye rebellious children! I will heal your back slidings!"

Then rises the eager outcry of those thus tenderly addressed, hastening to profit by the gracious invitation

Behold! we come to Thee! Thou art, indeed, Jehovah, our God! Assuredly only mocking disappointment comes from the high places on the hills, or from the multitude of idols on the mountains![1] Assuredly, in Jehovah our God, alone, is the salvation of Israel! Baal, and the Asherah—The Shame—have consumed the substance of our fathers, from the youth of the nation, till now; their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters, have been lost to us, by the judgments we have suffered for our sin,[2] and by the human sacrifices we have offered. Let us lie down in our shame; let our confusion cover us! For we have sinned against Jehovah, our God; we, and our fathers, from the earliest times[3] until now, and have not hearkened to the voice of Jehovah, our God.

This confession God graciously accepts, and promises His restored favour, if the penitence expressed be sincere and permanent.

If thou dost really turn back to Me,[4] O Israel, saith Jehovah, then thou wilt return to thy land;[5] and if thou really put away thy idol abominations[6] from My sight,[7] and runnest not after

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[1] This rendering, which is that of Hitzig, seems the best. De Wette translates it, "The idolatrous noise of the mountains," in allusion to the vociferous cries, etc. of the worshippers of Baal.

[2] Isa. lxv. 21, 22.

[3] Lit., "From our youth," *i.e.* as a nation.

[4] Jer. iv. 1, 2.

[5] *De Wette.*

[6] 1 Kings xi. 5–7. 2 Kings xxiii. 13.

[7] The Sept. has "out of thy mouth," an allusion to their eating meats offered to idols. See Zech. ix. 7. The Levitical laws were thus in force, according to this reading, which is that of Ewald, and Hitzig.

them, and if thou wilt swear truly, uprightly, and with thy whole heart, "By the life of Jehovah,"[1] to do all this, then shall the nations bless themselves in Me, and in Me shall they glory.[2]

Judah, in its self-righteousness, was little prepared to anticipate a fate like that of the Ten Tribes. Had not reformation begun under Josiah? But the prophet warns them, that only sincere repentance can save them from the same ruin as had overtaken their brethren.

Think not,[3] O Judah, that hollow outward amendment will avert a like doom. For thus says Jehovah: Plough up your fallow ground,[4] and sow not among thorns; good resolutions are not enough, if you still cherish sin in your heart. Consecrate yourselves to Jehovah, by a circumcision of the heart, and be not content with being consecrated to Him only by that of the body. Circumcise your hearts—be truly, not merely outwardly, My people—ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, lest My indignation burst forth on you like fire, and burn, so that no one can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.

No warnings could have been more solemn or awful than these; but they were of no avail. Josiah's Reformation proved largely superficial; no corresponding change showed itself in the public and private life of the community. Nor was any to be anticipated under exist-

[1] "As God liveth," or "as the Lord liveth," is the common form of oath in Palestine at this day, in confirming any matter Neil's *Palestine Explored*, p. 18. It is commanded in Deut. x. 20, 21, that the people "Swear by His, Jehovah's, name."

[2] Gen. xii. 3; xviii. 18; xxii. 18; xxvi. 4; xlviii. 20. The Hebrew has "Him" for Me, which is used to prevent a change of person not permitted by our idioms.

[3] Jer. iv. 3, 4.

[4] The words are "plough up your ploughed land." The ground was ploughed several times between each sowing. The stubble ploughed in was succeeded by a crop of thorns, and these had to be again turned under. See p. 8. Also *Land and Book*, p. 348.

ing circumstances. To use one of their own metaphors, the nation must be purified in the furnace of affliction, and Jeremiah was now commissioned to announce this.

"The North" was the quarter from which the past disasters of both Israel and Judah had come, and the calamities of the near future were to burst over the land from the same regions. The nation to be employed as the instrument of Divine justice was not, however, distinctly named in Jeremiah's first utterances, and opinion has been divided respecting it. Eichhorn first suggested that the great "Scythian" invasion was intended, and in this he has been followed by Ewald, Hitzig, Bertheau, Mövers, and Duncker.[1] But it seems a fatal objection to this theory that chariots—which the Scythians certainly did not use—are mentioned as a special characteristic of the hostile forces. These savage hordes brought with them vast numbers of wagons, each drawn by over twenty oxen, and bearing a wicker frame covered with black or white felt, thirty feet in diameter—a great tent in fact—lifted bodily off the carriage when they encamped for the night.[2] But these, assuredly, could not move "like a whirlwind."[3] It seems safer, therefore, to conclude that the Chaldeans from Babylon are intended, though nothing is said of the deportation of the population of Judah, but only of their being ruthlessly slaughtered.[4] Nor is it strange, though the first invasion by Nebuchadnezzar was still about thirty years distant, that Babylon should already have been dreaded. Nineveh was fast sinking, and had, indeed, been saved for a time, only by the inroad of the Northern Barbarians. It was destined to fall within the next fifteen

[1] *Gesch. des Alterth.*, vol. i. p. 751 ff.
[2] Blakesley's *Herod.*, iv. 69.
[3] Jer. iv. 13.
[4] Jer. iv. 7, 20.

or sixteen years, before the victorious Medes and Babylonians, who had shown wonderful vigour since the death of Assurbanipal. Nabopolassar, formerly Assyrian viceroy of Babylon, had not only won and maintained his independence, but was threatening the very existence of the Assyrian capital. Such a state of affairs, especially seen in the light of Divine disclosure, would leave no room for hesitation.

Under these circumstances, Jeremiah, somewhere about the year B.C. 623, when the reformation had been some years in progress,[1] startled Jerusalem by a new and awful announcement, that the long suffering forbearance of Jehovah being at last exhausted, He had determined to let loose a terrible enemy on Judah, and bring on its capital the long predicted Day of His vengeance.

Make it known aloud in Judah, cried he; proclaim it in Jerusalem,[2] saying: Blow the trumpet of alarm in the land; cry with a mighty voice[3]—"Gather yourselves together, ye people of the open villages, and let us go into the fortified towns."[4] Raise a flag to point out the way to Zion:[5] flee thither for refuge; make no delay. For I, Jehovah, am about to bring evil out of the North, and a great destruction. The Lion has come up from his thicket;[6] the destroyer of the nations has struck his tents,[7] and

[1] It began apparently in B.C. 626.

[2] Jer. iv. 5, 9.

[3] Lit., "with full throat."

[4] So the inhabitants of Attica crowded into Athens on occasion of a Spartan invasion. *Thuc.*, ii. 52. So, also, at Jerusalem before the last siege.

[5] Isa. xi. 10, 12.

[6] The thickets, or "swelling," or "excellency" of the bed of the Jordan were the great haunt of lions in Jeremiah's day. Hence "come up." It refers to the animal's ascent from its lair in the sunken jungle, which stretches at intervals along the whole course of the Jordan, far below the level of Anathoth and Jerusalem. See Jer. xxv. 38; xlix. 19; l. 44. Also Wilton's *Negeb*, p. 43.

[7] Lit., "has pulled up his tent stakes."

set out on his march, to make thy land desolate; O Judah, thy cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant![1] Because of this, gird yourselves with sackcloth, in token of national mourning; beat on your breasts,[2] and raise the loud wail; for the burning anger[3] of Jehovah is not turned back from us![4] At that day, says Jehovah, the heart of the king and the heart of the princes will faint:[5] the unfaithful priests be petrified with terror; the false prophets be in consternation!

These prophets had built great hopes on the restoration of the temple and the destruction of idols and heathen altars now going on, and had confidently predicted peace and prosperity.

Then said I,[6] alas, O Lord, Jehovah,[7] Thou hast surely let this people, Judah, and the citizens of Jerusalem, be greatly deceived by the false prophets, who, thinking the return to Thy worship would bring prosperity, have told them, "Ye shall have peace." But the sword is about to pierce to the very soul! When the enemy is advancing, it shall be said to this people and to Jerusalem—"A scorching east wind blows from the burnt up[8] hills of the wilderness, towards the daughter of My people; a wind not

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[1] See Jer. chap. xliii. 5–7.

[2] Lit.

[3] See iv. 4.

[4] Their reformation had as yet been only superficial. The sins of the past had not been heartily forsaken.

[5] Keil and Hitzig understand this passage: the intellect will be paralysed—they will "lose their head."

[6] By a slight change in a vowel, Ewald would read, "Hence it is said," putting the verse into the mouth of the false prophets, who claim that their announcement of "peace" was from Jehovah. It would read thus: "Hence it is said, Verily, Thou hast deceived this people and Jerusalem, O Lord Jehovah, saying, 'You shall have peace,' whereas, the sword reaches to the soul."

[7] Jer. iv. 10–13.

[8] Lit., "bare."

to winnow or to cleanse, for its gusts will carry away chaff and grain together:[1] a storm-wind[2] comes from Me upon them."

Now, therefore, says Jehovah, shall I give forth My sentence against them.[3] Behold the enemy comes up in dense, huge masses, like clouds;[4] his chariots rush on like a whirlwind; his horses are swifter than eagles in their flight. Woe to us, we are destroyed!

Salvation from utter ruin is still possible! But, for this, real, not merely nominal, reformation, is before all things needed.

O Jerusalem,[5] wash thy heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved! How long shall thy sinful thoughts[6] lodge within thee? It is surely high time to amend, for, hark, a voice cries from Dan, in the north, announcing the approach of the foe, and the evil news is echoed back from the mountains of Ephraim! "Make it known among the nations," shouts the messenger,[7] "proclaim it in Jerusalem—Besiegers come from a far country and lift up their voice against the towns of Judah." Like watchers of a field are they round about Zion,[8] because she

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[1] Wetstein, in *Delitzsch's Hiob*, p. 320. "In the harvest time the threshed grain lying on the open-air threshing-floors cannot be winnowed. A moderate and steady breeze, which comes only from the west and south, is needed. The north wind is too strong, and the east wind comes in continual gusts, which blow away grain and chaff together." Winnowing is done, as a rule, between 4 p.m. and a half-hour before sunrise, *i.e.* in the evening and during the night, while the west wind from the sea is blowing. Riehm, *HWB.*, p. 23.

[2] *Hitzig.* [3] *De Wette.* [4] Ezek. xxxviii. 16.

[5] Jer. iv. 14–18. [6] *Eichhorn*, false hopes.

[7] This is the sense given by most, implying a summons to them to see the judgments of God, even on His chosen people. Hitzig translates the phrase, "make it known respecting the barbarians, that," etc. It would thus be a proclamation of the approach of the enemy.

[8] The keepers or watchers of a field or vineyard cry out loudly at intervals through the night, to let it be known that a strict

has been rebellious against Me, says Jehovah. Thy way and thy doings have brought this upon thee! This is the fruit of thy wickedness, and, indeed, it is bitter, and pierces even to thy heart!

The agony of grief at such a calamity is universal, and is expressed in touching words, for himself and others, by the prophet.

My breast![1] O, my breast! I tremble for sorrow![2] The walls of my heart will break! My heart groans within me; I cannot keep it still.[3] For thou, my soul, hearest the trumpet peals; hearest the cries of war! Calamity after calamity is proclaimed, for the whole land is laid waste: the dwellings[4] of My people are suddenly spoiled; their tents[5] in a moment! How long shall I see the banner[6] and hear the loud trumpet?

Jehovah now speaks—

Could it, indeed, be otherwise? For truly My people is foolish;[7] they have not known Me: stupid children, without sense; wise to do evil, but without sense to do good.

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watch is being kept. There are no *enclosed fields* in Palestine. Neil, *Palestine*, p. 219. The watchers, therefore, in reality are in the open country, and the tents of the besiegers round Jerusalem are compared to their huts. *Speaker's Comm.* See Lev. xiv. 7; xvii. 5. Luke ii. 18. Job xxvii. 18.

[1] Jer. iv. 19-21.

[2] I writhe in pain.

[3] Or, hold my peace.

[4] Tents.

[5] "Tent-coverings." The use of these words for the dwellings of a settled people show how long the tradition of their former nomadic life remained amongst them, as, indeed, it does, in the feast of Tabernacles, to this day. See for similar expressions, 2 Sam. xviii. 17; xx. 1. 1 Kings viii. 66; xii. 16.

[6] The Assyrians had standards fixed on their chariots, generally emblems enclosed in a circle, with streamers waving from the long pole which they surmounted. Layard's *Nineveh*, vol. ii. p. 347.

[7] Jer. iv. 22.

The prophet, therefore, passes on to describe the awfulness of the impending judgments :—

I looked on the earth,[1] and, behold, it is waste and empty; on the heavens, and their light is gone. I looked on the mountains, and, lo, they trembled; on the hills, and they swayed to and fro; I looked, and, lo, there were no men, and all the birds of the heavens were gone. I looked, and lo, the fruitful land was become a desolate wilderness,[2] and all its towns were thrown down before Jehovah; before His glowing anger! For thus saith Jehovah—The whole land shall be desolate; though I will not make an utter end of it. For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be darkened, because I, Jehovah, have spoken and purposed, and will not repent, nor draw back from it. Every city[3] shall flee at the noise of the horsemen and archers;[4] the population crowd into the dark thickets[5] of the woods, and climb up into the hollow rocks.[6] Every city is forsaken; no man dwells in any of them!

And thou,[7] daughter of Zion, given up to the spoil,[8] what art thou doing? Dost thou hope by thy arts to win over the victors to mercy, as a woman by her charms prevails on her lovers to show her favour? It will be useless. Though thou clothest thyself in purple, and deckest thyself with golden ornaments, and makest thine eyes appear larger, by painting thine eyelids with antimony,[9] in vain dost thou make thyself fair! The foe thou wouldst win to love thee, will despise thee and seek thy life! For I hear a cry as of a woman in labour, the cry as of one that is bearing her first child; it is the voice of the daughter of Zion, sighing deeply, as she spreads out her hands in her sorrow, and

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[1] Jer. iv. 23–29. [2] *Hitzig.*

[3] This is clearly the proper reading. See *Keil. Sachs. Noyes.* The last word of the verse shows this. Instead of "therein" it should be "in them."

[4] Lit., "treaders of the bow." They bend it with the help of the foot.

[5] The word means a thicket *from its darkness.*

[6] The etym. shows that caves or hollows are meant.

[7] Jer. iv. 30, 31. [8] *Gesenius.*

[9] Lane's *Modern Egyptians,* vol. i. pp. 45, 46.

wailing: "Woe is me, my soul lies helpless before the murderers!"

But the fate of Jerusalem, though thus terrible, was not undeserved. Its corruption and wickedness were beyond conception.

Run ye to and fro,[1] through the streets of Jerusalem, saith Jehovah, and see and learn; seek in its open places, if ye can find a single man; seek if there be *one* who acts uprightly, who practises good faith, and I will pardon her. For even when they make oath "by the life of Jehovah," they nevertheless swear falsely.[2] Even an oath by the Sacred Name, which a true Jew would hold an inviolable pledge of faithfulness and honour is used by them to cover perjury!

The prophet now speaks.

O Jehovah, do not Thine eyes look for good faith? Thou smitest them, but they feel it not; Thou destroyest them, but they refuse to receive the lesson: they make their face harder than rock: they will not turn back. I thought in myself, "It must be only the poor who act thus; they act foolishly, because they do not know the way of Jehovah—the law of their God. I will go to the great people, and speak with them, for they know the way of Jehovah—the law of their God." But these, also, one and all, have broken in pieces the yoke of God's law, and torn away from its chains.[3]

For this cause [4] a lion from the forest [5] shall slay them; a wolf of the evenings [6] shall destroy them; a leopard shall keep an eye

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[1] Jer. v. 1-5. [2] Lev. xix. 12. Matt. v. 34, 35.

[3] The figure is from oxen chained to the plough.

[4] Jer. v. 6-8. [5] The word is yāār. See vol. iv. p. 358.

[6] Keil, Hitzig, Ewald, Sachs, De Wette, Naegelsbach, Driver, Cheyne, and Fürst, translate this word, "of the steppes." But Mühlau and Volck, and Gesenius, translate it as the plural of Ereb = "evening." Canon Tristram, in his *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, p. 154, gives the following incident, which vividly illustrates many texts. "Their boldness is very remarkable. When camping at desolate Moladah, on the southern frontier of Simeon, I had one

on[1] their towns; every one who goes out from them will be torn in pieces; because their transgressions are multiplied, their sins increased.

How, then, can I pardon you? Thy sons have forsaken me, and have sworn by the "No-gods!"[2] I bound them by a marriage

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evening wandered alone three or four miles from the tents. In returning before sunset, I suddenly noticed that I was followed at an easy distance by a large tawny wolf. The creature kept about 200 yards behind me, neither increasing nor diminishing his distance. I turned upon him, and he also turned. In vain I endeavoured to close with him, for he always exactly accommodated his pace to mine. We continued respectively to advance and retreat without coming to close quarters. The wolf's evident intention was to keep me in sight *until evening*, when he hoped to steal on me in the darkness, unperceived. He never uttered a sound of any kind, and walked as if unconscious of my presence. When it was nearly dark I found him rapidly closing upon me, and, thinking him within shot, I halted, when he, too, stood looking at me. I drew my charge, slipped down a ball, and took deliberate aim, without his moving. The bullet struck a rock between his legs, and then he turned and trotted very quietly away." *N. H. B.*, p. 154.

The word for "evenings" is identical with the plural of Arabah = "a desert," etc.—though the singular is Ereb. This plural is used only in this text, Jer. v. 6.

[1] The leopard was formerly common in Palestine. "The mountains of the leopards" are mentioned in Cant. iv. 8. The creature is still a pest to the herdsmen in the mountains of Gilead. The sheik of one village showed Canon Tristram four skins of leopards recently killed. Their tracks are frequently seen about the Dead Sea, and they are also found on Mount Tabor and Mount Carmel. Another animal of the leopard kind is also found occasionally on the hills of Palestine—the cheetah, or hunting leopard of India. It is much less formidable, however, than the leopard. Tristram, *N. H. B*, p. 113. Both are much dreaded, as they lurk about encampments, to pounce on any stray animal, or even men, who may come out after dark. The allusion in the text is to this habit. See Hos. xiii. 7.

[2] A contemptuous name for idols.

oath to me,[1] but they broke it and committed adultery, and trooped into the house of the harlot. Like over-fed stallions, they roam around:[2] they neigh each after the other's wife. Shall I not visit you for such things? says Jehovah. Shall not My soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

In spite, therefore, of the idea of security fostered by lying prophets, Jehovah will carry out His threats, and lay the land and its capital waste, by a cruel and terrible enemy, now formally commissioned to assail them.

Go up[3] amongst the planted rows of My vineyard,[4] and lay it waste, but do not utterly destroy it. Cut down its bearing shoots, for they are not Jehovah's! For both the House of Israel and the House of Judah have been utterly faithless to Me, saith Jehovah. They have denied Jehovah, and said, "He is not, and trouble will *not* come on us, and we will *not* see either sword or famine. The words of the prophets, who say we shall suffer this, will prove empty talk; for he who speaks through them is no god[5]—they speak of themselves, or by an evil spirit; may their prophecies come on their own head!"

Wherefore,[6] thus says Jehovah of Hosts, Because ye speak thus, behold, I shall make My words in thy mouth, fire, O Jeremiah, and this people wood, which the fire will burn up! Lo! I bring on you a nation from afar, O House of Israel,[7] says Jehovah;

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[1] *Keil. De Wette. Hitzig. Naegelsbach. Gesenius.* The only change needed in the Hebrew is the substitution of "Sh," for "S," which is found in the Masoretic notes. Shabah is "to swear, or, cause to swear;" Saba is "to feed to the full." See *Böttcher*, vol. ii. p. 154.

[2] *Gesenius. Keil.* [3] Jer. v. 10–13.

[4] Canaan is the vineyard of Jehovah. Isa. iii. 14; v. 1 ff. Jer. ii. 21. The Jews were the vine. That this figure is intended is shown by the second half of the verse, where branches must be read instead of "battlements." Eichhorn—whose translations are always vigorous—reads the passage: "Pull down the trellis work of her vines."

[5] Lit., "no one." [6] Jer. v. 14–18. [7] Judah.

a nation countless in numbers;[1] a nation of hoary antiquity;[2] a nation whose language you do not know; whose words you do not understand;[3] their quiver[4] is like an open grave; they are all mighty warriors. They shall eat up your harvest and your bread; they shall eat up your sons and your daughters;[5] they shall eat up your flocks and your herds; they shall eat up your vines and your fig trees; they will lay in ruins, at the point of the sword,[6] your fortified towns, in which you trust d. Yet, even in those days, says Jehovah, I will not make an utter end of you.

And when ye say,[7] "Why has Jehovah, our God, done all this to us," you shall answer them: As ye forsook Me and served foreign gods in your own land, ye shall serve foreigners in a land that is not yours.[8] Tell this to the House of Jacob, and publish it in Judah, saying: Hear this, ye foolish race—without understanding; who have eyes, and do not see; ears, and do not hear![9] Will ye not fear Me? says Jehovah; will ye not tremble before Me, who have placed the sand as a limit to the sea—a perpetual barrier, which it cannot pass? Though it lift itself up it is powerless; though its waves roar, they cannot cross the bounds I have set for it. But this people, less obedient than inanimate nature, has a revolting and rebellious heart: they turn away from Me, and go their own way, transgressing the laws I have

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[1] Lit., enduring; exhaustless in its numbers; not to be got rid of by the destruction of a part.

[2] The Chaldees were very ancient. Berosus represents the Chaldean kingdom as established at least twenty-three centuries before Christ. Rawlinson's *Anct. Mon.*, vol. i. p. 189.

[3] Their appeals for mercy would, thus, be idle. See Deut. xxviii. 49. See also Wilkins, *Phenicia and Israel*, p. 7.

[4] See Jer. iv. 29.

[5] It seems to have been the belief of the Jews, that the foes from the north devoured children.

[6] Or with weapons of war generally, Jer. xxxiii. 4. Ezek. xxvi. 9, "axes."

[7] Jer. v. 19–31.

[8] This would not apply if the enemy threatened were roving hordes, like those of the Scythians.

[9] Jer. iv. 22. Hos. vii. 11.

given them. Nor do they ever say in their hearts, "Let us now fear Jehovah, our God, who gives rain, both the early and the latter, in its season; who secures for us the return of the weeks appointed for the harvest."[1] Your iniquities have driven away these from you: your sins have deprived you of this good. For among My people are found wicked men; they lie in wait as a birdcatcher hides himself from the birds; they set murderous snares, and catch men. Their houses are full of riches gained by deceit; through this they have become great and rich. They have grown fat and shine with sleekness; they go beyond bounds in wickedness; as judges they do not uphold the right; they betray the cause of the fatherless—to make money out of them;[2] they do not uphold the right of the helpless. Shall I not visit them for such things, says Jehovah—shall not My soul be avenged on such a people?

An appalling and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule according to their word,[3] and My people like it to be thus.[4] But what will ye do when the end of all this comes—the awful judgment of God on the nation?

That judgment is no longer doubtful. A hostile army will, ere long, march against Jerusalem and besiege it.

[1] The seven weeks between the feast of the Passover and that of Weeks. On the day after the Sabbath in the former, the priest waved a sheaf of barley, the first-fruits of the early harvest, before Jehovah. Lev. xxiii. 10. At the latter, wheat-bread, the first-fruits of the second harvest, Lev. x. 17, was waved, the one crop ripening so much later than the other.

[2] 1 Kings xxii. 15. Jer. ii. 37; x. 21.

[3] The deepening corruption of the prophets made the position of Judah increasingly hopeless. The priesthood was against Jeremiah; yet, if the prophets had supported him, he might have felt that all was not lost. But that lying prophets should oppose and contradict revelation, and that they should authoritatively interpret the Law to suit their own aims, and gain the priesthood to carry out this organized perversion of the Divine will, was indeed appalling and horrible.

[4] Amos iv. 5.

Flee, O ye sons of Benjamin[1] out of the midst of Jerusalem;[2] let the trumpets sound in Tekoa: display a blazing fire beacon[3] at Bethhaccerem,[4] for overwhelming calamity is imminent from the north. Comely and delicate as she is, I will destroy the daughter of Zion![5] The shepherds with their flocks—that is, kings with their hosts—are coming towards her; they will pitch their tents round about her; they will cut down, every one, his share of her. They will say, let us offer the war sacrifices and lose no time; let us go up and storm her at noon, in the heat of the day,[6] when men rest, and attack will be least expected! Even this delay, indeed, will seem too long for them. "Alas, the day is sinking," will be the cry; "the evening shades are stretching out. Up! let us storm her in the night, and destroy her palaces, without waiting for noon!"[7]

For thus[8] has Jehovah of Hosts spoken—Hew down her trees,[9] and raise a mound against Jerusalem,[10] which is the city to be

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[1] Jer. vi. 1–5.

[2] Many Benjamites lived in Jerusalem, 1 Chron. ix. 3, 7. Jeremiah perhaps thinks of them, first, as his fellow-tribesmen. Jerusalem stood in the territory of Benjamin.

[3] The word Masaith refers to the ascending of smoke in burning. A word formed from it is used in the Talmud for the fire beacons at the time of the new moon. They were often kindled on the top of a tower, which the word also means. See Jud. xx. 38.

[4] Tekoa is a hamlet in the hill country, twelve miles to the south of Jerusalem, and visible from the city. Bethhaccerem lies in the hills nearer Jerusalem. *Hieron.* in loc. Tekoa = "pitching of tents," or perhaps "trumpet clang." Bethhaccerem = "the house of the vineyard." It seems to have stood on the prominent conical hill known now as the Frank Mountain, and would thus be eminently suited for a fire signal. *Bovet*, p. 283.

[5] Jerusalem.

[6] Isa. xiii. 3. Jer. li. 27, 28. Deut. xx. 2. Ezek. xxi. 21–23.

[7] The scientific warfare implied in besieging a fortress was unknown to the "Scythians."

[8] Jer. vi. 6–8. [9] Deut. xx. 20.

[10] A vast mound of earth, sloping on the outer side, was raised close to the walls of besieged town; its top as high as that of

punished; she is filled to the full with oppression of the poor and needy, by fraud, extortion, and pillage.[1] As a fountain sends forth its flowing waters, so she pours out the stream of her wickedness[2]: violence and plundering, even in My sight, are heard within her; suffering and death, from wounds, are continual.[3]

Be warned, O Jerusalem, lest My soul be alienated from thee,[4] lest I make thee desolate; a land not inhabited.

Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts, the remnant of Israel[5] shall be gleaned thoroughly, as men glean[6] the vintage, turning back the hand again and again, like the gleaner, to the cluster-bearing shoots.[7]

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the walls themselves. Wooden towers (for which the felling of trees was necessary) were then dragged up the inclined plane of the mound, to drive the defenders from the ramparts. This course was usual with the Assyrians and Babylonians, 2 Kings xix. 32. From them the art probably passed to the Medes and Persians. Herodotus mentions it in his narrative of the campaign of Cyrus in Asia Minor. The mound in this case was made after the arrival of Harpagus, *the Mede. Herod.*, i. 162. See note. Blakesley's *Herod.*, i. 119. Rawlinson's *Herod.*, i. 162.

[1] Ezek. xxii. 7, 12. Ps. lxxiii. 8. Jer. xxii. 17. Nah. iii. 1.

[2] Hitzig and Graf render these words, "as a cistern keeps its water cool and fresh; so she, her wickedness!" They suppose the word used, to be derived from a verb meaning "to be cool," or "fresh" (Karar), but it is generally assumed to be from the verb Kūr, "to dig out" (so that the waters rise in the excavation).

[3] This seems the most exact sense of the two words used, "Choli" and "Maccah," as seen in their renderings elsewhere in the A. V.

[4] The word used is applied to the violent tearing away, or dislocation of a member. It is most touching to think of Jehovah employing such a word, to show the sorrow with which He would at last withdraw from His people, if they forced Him to do so.

[5] Chap. iv. 27; v. 10, 18.

[6] The word to glean is from a root = to drink again and again till one can drink no more, and implies completeness—the leaving nothing.

[7] So Fürst and Hitzig. It is hard to decide where doctors differ. Hitzig asserts that the word Salsilloth—translated "baskets" in

The prophet is at a loss to whom to announce this awful message. Those who should especially hear it, refuse to do so. He will, therefore, proclaim it aloud in the streets.

But to whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear it?[1] Behold! their ear is uncircumcised, and thus closed up, so that they cannot hear.[2] Behold! the word of Jehovah is a derision to them; they have no pleasure in it. But I am full of the fierce anger of Jehovah; I can no longer keep it shut up in my breast. I will pour it forth[3] to the children playing in the street; to the company of young men met together for amusement or talk; for both husband and wife will be overtaken by my judgments; the old man also, and even he whose days are nearly over.[4] And their houses will pass to others; and so will their fields and their wives together—for I will stretch out My hand over the inhabitants of the land, says Jehovah. For, small and great, they are all bent on selfish and base gain; from the prophet to the priest, every one cheats. And both prophet and priest pretend to heal the wound of my people, as if it were slight—making nothing of it[5]—saying, "All is well, all is well," when it is the very reverse! They will have to be ashamed for the abomination they have committed; yet they are not at present ashamed in the least, they do not know how to blush. Therefore will they fall amongst the falling when the city is taken; at the time when I visit them, they will stumble, says Jehovah!

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the A. V. never means baskets—but always "tendrils" and the like. Fürst agrees with him. But Gesenius, Mühlau and Volck, De Wette, and Sachs think it does mean baskets. Yet, as Eichhorn, Keil, and Ewald, agree with Hitzig and Fürst, and the sense appears better, I have adopted their rendering. Salsilloth is, indeed, not unlike Zalzallim (Isa. xviii. 5), which certainly means vine shoots.

[1] Jer. vi. 10, 15. [2] Isai. vi. 10. Jer. iv. 4.

[3] The imperative is used, but the future suits the English sense better. The prophet is speaking to himself.

[4] 1 Chron. xxix. 28. [5] *Sept.*

Without true repentance and a change of heart, judgment cannot be averted, whatever sacrifices they may offer. Jeremiah is saying nothing new. The course he urges was that in which the godly among their fathers walked.

Thus says Jehovah,[1] "Take your stand in the ways; look round you and ask, if you have any doubt, for the old paths;[2] the paths which, alone, lead to true good; and walk in them, and you will find rest for your souls." But they said, "We will not walk in them." I also set watchers—the prophets[3]—for you, saying, "Hark, the sound of the trumpet!" But they said, we will not hearken.

Hear, therefore, ye foreign nations;[4] learn, O assembly of the peoples,[5] that which is coming upon them! Hear, O earth! behold, I will bring evil upon this race as the fruit of their devices, because they have not hearkened to My words, and as to my law,[6] they have despised it. This being so, what is the incense worth to Me, that comes from Sheba, and the costly spice-reed from a far country?[7] Your whole-burnt-offerings are not acceptable to Me, and your sacrifices do not smell sweet to Me![8]

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[1] Jer. vi. 16, 17. [2] Deut. xxxii. 7. Jer. xviii. 15; xxxii. 39, 40.
[3] Ezek. iii. 17; xxxiii. 7. [4] Jer. vi. 18-20.

[5] Ewald renders these words, "O congregation of Israel." Graf thinks the text corrupt. The Sept. has, "and they that feed their flocks." [6] Torah.

[7] Incense. Comp. *Aen.*, i. 416–17. "And a hundred altars glow with Sabæan incense." Frankincense, or incense, was a gum obtained from the large timber trees known as Boswellia. They grow in India, but the genuine incense was obtained from a species found only in South Arabia and Somali Land. The "sweet cane" should be "the fine-scented cane," brought either from Arabia or India, perhaps through Egypt, and burnt with the incense for the sake of its rich perfume. The Sept., for "sweet cane," has "cinnamon." *Weihrauch*, Schenkel's *Bib. Lex.* Tristram's *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, pp. 355, 485.

[8] Bredenkamp, *Gesetz und Propheten*, p. 103, calls attention to

Therefore, thus saith Jehovah,[1] Behold, I will lay stumbling blocks before this people,[2] and the fathers and sons shall together fall over them; the neighbour and his friend shall perish. Thus saith Jehovah, Behold, a people comes from the land of the North; and a great nation will rise up from the farthest parts of the earth. They lay hold of bow and javelin; they are cruel and have no mercy; their voice roars like the sea; they ride on horses. Their army is arrayed for battle, against thee, O daughter of Zion!

The people of Judah and Jerusalem will be alarmed even at the report of the approach of such a foe; but the prophet can give them no comfort. In that day they will say:—

"We have heard the report of his approach.[3] Our arms hang powerless; anguish has seized us; trembling, like that of a woman in travail! Go not forth to the open country, and do not walk on the common road; for the enemy have keen swords; fear of them reigns on every side." O daughter of my people, tie a robe of sackcloth round thee; roll thyself in ashes; make thee lamentation as for an only son—the bitterest wailing! For the spoiler will come on us suddenly!

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this verse, as showing that in Josiah's day the Jews zealously observed the ceremonial law of sacrifice and offering. They offered sacrifices, in the thought that these would atone for wickedness in which they still persisted. To explain away this, the new critics venture an arbitrary conjecture that the Law mentioned in the 19th verse, did not include the ceremonial laws; that these, in fact, were not known till much later! The uselessness of ceremonial, apart from morality, is often urged by the prophets. 1 Sam. xv. 22. Isa. i. 11. Hos. vi. 6. Amos v. 21. Micah vi. 6. Ps. l. 8, etc. But its condemnation implies its being practised. How then could it be only an invention of the time after the exile, as the new criticism maintains?

[1] Jer. vi. 21–23.

[2] The invasion of the enemy.

[3] Jer. vi. 24–26.

Jehovah now speaks, reassuring Jeremiah that He will support him in his Divine commission.

I have set thee[1] as an assayer, or tester, among My people, that thou mayest know and try their way, and whilst thou doest so, I will keep thee, as a strong fortress, from harm.[2] They are, all, the worst of revolters; going hither and thither to slander;[3] copper and iron are they, not gold; they are all evil doers. No judgments sent for their good have reformed them. I have laboured with them as a purifier labours at the furnace, with metal that proves worthless.[4] The bellows have been blown till they are scorched; the lead, added as a flux, to bring away the slack, is burned into fumes; the refiner has tried to smelt the metal in vain; the dross—that is, the wicked—cannot be separated from what little silver there is![5] Call the whole people, therefore, "reprobate silver," for Jehovah has rejected them.

The brevity of Eastern popular addresses of any kind forbids the thought that lengthy compositions, such as the above, were delivered at one time, as a connected whole. Jeremiah, himself, indeed, tells us, that his prophecies, spoken in the reign of Josiah and subsequently, were inscribed on a roll in the fourth year of Jehoiakim,[6] that is, in the year B.C. 606,[7] when the good king had been dead three or four years. Nor did the prophet himself write them out. His friend Baruch, of the noble house of Neriah, a man skilled in caligraphy

[1] Jer. vi. 27-30. [2] See chap. i 18. [3] Chap. ix. 4.

[4] "A kuli came and formed a little furnace close to the verandah, by lighting a very small fire of charcoal, making a hole about two feet distant, for the nose of his bellows, which were of the skin of a goat, with a slit at the back which he alternately opened and closed, and connecting the bellows and fire by a little underground passage." *Six Years in India*, p. 93.

[5] This is a paraphrase of a difficult passage.

[6] Jer. xxxvi. 1, 2.

[7] B.C. 603. *Dict. of Bible*, art. *Baruch*.

and famous for general culture,[1] "wrote from his mouth, on a roll of a book, all the words of Jehovah which He had spoken to him,"[2] and, when this copy had been destroyed by Jehoiakim, made a second, at the prophet's dictation, "adding, besides, to them, many like words."[3] It is impossible, therefore, to say what portion of any long discourse in the Book, as it now stands, was spoken at a particular time. We can only reproduce them as they are given, with the general knowledge that they were uttered on various occasions during Josiah's reign.

[1] Jos., *Ant.*, X. vi. 2. [2] Jer. xxxvi. 4–18.
[3] Jer. xxxvi. 32.

## CHAPTER IX.

### JUDAH UNDER JOSIAH.

THE first steps towards the abolition of idolatry, and the formal re-establishment of Jehovah-worship, had preceded the "call" of Jeremiah [1] by about a year. Zephaniah, and perhaps other prophets whose names have perished, had quickened the tender conscience of Josiah, and strengthened the hands of the survivors of the great persecution, who now zealously strove to restore the ancient faith, amidst almost overwhelming difficulties. In the East, however, the personal action of the monarch is decisive in all public action; the community, as a rule, passively submitting to the royal will. All change, in fact, must be initiated by the ruler; his word is the only law; obedience alone is the part of subjects.

In the year B.C. 628, then—three years before Nabopolassar, father of Nebuchadnezzar, founded the independent monarchy of Babylon,[2] so soon to be the destroyer of Judah—the work of reformation had been begun by Josiah, now a young man of twenty. Jerusalem and Judah were, naturally, the first field of activity.[3] No

[1] B.C. 627.

[2] Smith's *Assyria*, p. 149. Assurbanipal had died in B.C. 626.

[3] 2 Chron. xxxiv. 3.

sentimental tenderness for art or old associations mitigated the earnestness of the religious revolution.[1] The stately high places were levelled with the ground; the

[1] I would here enter my earnest protest against the worship of Art which now reigns in the ecclesiastical world. Beauty and taste are becoming, in the House and Service of God; but the passion for colour and form, in every detail of the Church and its services, has become a national calamity by its excess. The dress of the minister, not the truth he proclaims; the rendering of the service, not its solemn words; the mediævalism of the sacred building in every particular, not the holy use for which it is designed, are most on the tongues of men.

St. Bernard was right in saying, that "the immense height of the churches, their immoderate length, superfluous breadth, costly polishing and strange designs, while they attract the eyes of the worshipper, hinder the devotion of the soul, and somehow remind me of the old Jewish ritual!" *Life, by Morrison*, p. 147.

"The more I have examined the subject," says John Ruskin, "the more dangerous have I found it to dogmatize respecting the character of the Art which is likely, at a given period, to be most useful to the cause of religion. One great fact first meets me. I never met with a Christian whose heart was thoroughly set upon the world to come, and, so far as human judgment could pronounce, was perfect and right before God, *who cared about Art at all.*" *Stones of Venice*, vol. ii. p. 103.

"'May the Devil fly away with the Fine Arts,' exclaimed, confidentially, once, in my hearing, one of our most distinguished public men; a sentiment that often recurs to me. A public man, intent on any real business, does, I suppose, find the Fine Arts rather imaginary, feels them to be a pretentious nothingness; a confused superfluity and nuisance, purchased with cost; what he, in brief language, denominates a bore." Carlyle, *Latter Day Pamphlets, Jesuitism*, p. 34.

"Early Christians, English Puritans, Cistercian mediæval monks, and modern Reformers of an earnest type, agree on one point, however much they may differ on others, namely, that people who are filled with practical sincerity, are apt to pass by Art with indifference, or reject it with anger." Morrison's *St. Bernard*, p. 149.

Asherahs, the marble and molten images of the gods, utterly destroyed; the altars of the various Baals, with the obelisks, or sun images, beside them, broken down in the presence of the king.[1] There are no fewer than twenty words in Hebrew for idols; a proof of the number and variety of these abominations, then worshipped over the land. Utterly and permanently to defile the idolatrous holy places, Josiah caused the bones of the dead idol-priests to be taken from their graves, and burnt on the altars at which they had ministered; a violation of the sanctity of the grave unprecedented in Jewish history, and bitterly condemned by the prophet Amos when committed by the heathen king of Moab.[2] Nor was this vigorous action confined to Judah or Jerusalem. Assyria, now torn and weakened almost to its fall by rebellions and wars in the East, had left the territory of the Ten Tribes unoccupied, and Josiah had virtually resumed possession of it. Bands of official iconoclasts were therefore sent through the ancient bounds of Manasseh and Ephraim, the central tribes, and even as far as Naphtali on the extreme north, and Simeon on the far south, below Judah. Idolatry had everywhere taken root. The mixed population still lingering among the ruined towns[3] of the old Northern Kingdom; a heathen medley brought from distant countries by the Assyrian king, with a remnant of the Jewish tribes; knew no religion, apparently, but the worship of a multitude of foreign gods. Nor were even the shepherds of the Negeb, the territory of the Simeonites, less corrupted.

[1] 2 Chron. xxxiv. 4. [2] Amos ii. 1.

[3] 2 Chron. xxxiv. 6. The words "with their mattocks round about," should be read, in their ruins round about. The land had been laid waste by Shalmaneser, and its towns had, for the most part, remained in ruins ever since.

The old religion of the nation had well nigh vanished from the land. Every idolatrous symbol was now, however, destroyed, and in appearance, at least, the country returned to the national faith.

Some particulars of this great revolution are fortunately preserved. In Jerusalem, the purification of the temple was entrusted to Hilkiah, the high priest, and his deputy,[1] with a body of ordinary priests, and the great Levite officials who had charge of the sacred gates. The sanctuary had been turned, by Manasseh and Amon, into the head quarters of Baal worship—the most famous image, known as "the Baal," being set up in it, with an Asherah, and symbols of "all the host of heaven," close by.[2] Everything connected with these supreme abominations was removed from the temple precincts—their altars, statues, vestments, and holy vessels. All that was destructible was carried down to the Kedron Valley, outside the walls, and burned; the ashes being collected for the special purpose of defiling the high places. A special order of priests, the Chemarim,[3] clad in black, in contrast to the white robe of the priests of Jehovah, had burned incense under Ahaz, Manasseh, and Amon, on the idolatrous Bamoth, or high places, in the towns of Judah and round Jerusalem. Others had performed the same office on the altars of Baal, the sun, the moon, the planets, or perhaps the signs of the zodiac,[4] and of all the hosts of heaven. These Josiah simply suppressed.[5]

[1] 2 Kings xxiii. 5.

[2] 2 Kings xxiii. 4. For "the priests of the second order," read as in the text.

[3] 2 Kings xxiii. 4. [4] Zeph. i. 4. Hos. x. 5.

[5] Heb. Mazzaloth = Arabic, Menazil—the houses of the twelve signs of the heavens, in which, successively, the sun was supposed to dwell.. *Ges. Thes.*, p. 869; Delitzsch, *Hiob*, on xxxviii. 32.

The Asherah set up again by Amon in the temple, after having been removed by Manasseh, was dragged outside the walls, as the object of peculiar detestation, to the deep ravine of the Kedron, and burned; any fragments left being stamped to powder and strewn over the graves in the public cemetery, to desecrate them by contact with the dead.[1] It was a repetition of the intense abhorrence of idolatry shown in David's burning the gods of the Philistines,[2] and in the treatment of the golden calf by Moses:[3] the command enjoining it occurring in Deuteronomy.[4]

Associated with the Asherah in the temple, were numbers of wretched beings of both sexes,[5] consecrated to immorality in connection with the Asherah; their gains passing to its priests, whose slaves they were. The men, it would seem, wandered at times over the land, in the service of vice; the women busied themselves by day in weaving hangings for the Asherah and tents for its nightly orgies. Both they and the Galli[6] associated with them, had lived in the temple, and its precincts; but the places they had occupied were now pulled down, and the spot purified from every trace of their presence.

Numbers of Israelitish priests, during the long reign of idolatry, had so far apostatized as to burn incense on the high places, from Geba,[7] the northern boundary of Judah,

[1] 2 Kings xxiii. 6. See Wilkins' *Israel and Phenicia*, p. 162. Jer. xxvi. 23.

[2] 1 Chron. xiv. 12. [3] Exod. xxxii. 20.

[4] Deut. vii. 25. As the "Book of the Law" was not yet discovered in the temple, the course taken by Josiah must have been, like that of David, determined from other sources; that is, both David and Josiah must have known this part of the Law.

[5] They were the "sacred slaves" of the Asherah, the Kedaishim (mas.), and the Kedaishoth (fem). See vol. iii. p. 364.

[6] See p. 33, and vol. iii. p. 364. [7] Three hours north of Jerusalem.

to Beersheba, in the far south of the Negeb. These were brought to Jerusalem, but not allowed to officiate at the altar of Jehovah. They were also kept distinct from the members of their order who had remained true to the old faith, but were permitted to receive their priestly maintenance from the "holy bread;" eating it, however, at home with their families, as defiled priests,[1] not in the temple with their "clean" brethren.[2] Perhaps, however, they were allowed to discharge subordinate duties in the temple.[3]

High places with altars had been built at different gates of Jerusalem, consecrated, perhaps, to the supposed hairy demons of the wilderness.[4] These, like all others, were broken down. Tophet, "the spitting,"[5] or ab-

[1] Lev. xxi. 17–22. How was this law, as to defiled priests, known *then*, if Leviticus dates only from the Exile?

[2] A recent critic says: "The high places were tolerated because they were not known to be any breach of the religious constitution of Israel. Even the temple priests knew of no such constitution." *Bible in Jewish Church*, p. 247. But if so, why were their priests now degraded? Why were the priests who had remained true to the old religion kept apart from them as from a degraded class? As to the argument from the earlier kings not having suppressed the high places, one has only to remember that it was a step so dangerous, as interfering with popular superstition and prejudice, that Rabshakeh actually hoped to stir up a revolt against Hezekiah, by reminding the citizens of Jerusalem that he had ventured to touch them. No one before Josiah *had been able* to suppress them entirely. We have a parallel case in our own national history. What a storm of popular feeling, shown in fierce revolts, was excited by even a strong-willed king like Henry VIII. interfering with the traditional holy places of England!

[3] *Thenius*, on 2 Kings xxiii. 9.

[4] *Geiger*. *Graetz*, vol. ii. p. 287. See p. 99.

[5] *Ges. Thes.*, p. 1497. Other etymologies are given, but this seems the best.

horrence, in the Valley[1] of Hinnom, under the walls of Jerusalem, was carefully defiled, to prevent its ever again being used for human sacrifices. The sacred white horses of the sun,[2] given to the sun-god by Ahaz, Manasseh, and Amon, and stalled in the cells[3] on the west of the temple forecourt, where the street ran up to it from the town,[4]—cells, named after Nethanmelech, a well-known official,[5] perhaps their founder or builder, were taken away, and the chariots they drew in the festal processions of the sun-god, were burned.[6] Altars in honour of the host of heaven[7] had been raised by the late idolatrous kings on the top of the Aliyeh, or roof-chamber, built by Ahaz, perhaps on the flat roof of the

[1] Valley = Gă, Gai or Gĕ = a ravine or gorge-like glen.

[2] Horses were sacred to the sun among the Armenians, Persians, Ethiopians, Greeks, and Assyrians, and were sacrificed to the sun-god.

[3] Very likely storehouses for material used in the temple worship. Chron. ix. 26; Neh. x. 38.

[4] The word translated suburbs in A.V., is Parvarim, sing. Parvar, identical with Porbar, 1 Chron. xxvi. 18. I have followed Keil's rendering of its meaning. Gesenius (*Thes.*, p. 1123) thinks it was a portico to a summer-house or open kiosk. But Böttcher fancies it was an open space, like a suburb. The Talmud translates a related word by "suburbs—places near a city." In their *Aehrenlese*, vol. ii. p. 113, Böttcher and Mühlau render the words before this: "he took away the horses, so that they should not enter into the House of Jehovah." Altogether, the passage is far from easy. Robertson Smith, translates the solitary word parvarim, as "the portico, with its brazen altar and lofty columns (Jachin and Boaz);" and tells us that the brazen altar, etc., are described or figured on Phenician inscriptions and coins. So much can be made out of nothing! *Prophets of Israel*, p. 57.

[5] A.V. the chamberlain, lit. "eunuch," thence "a court official," though not a eunuch.

[6] 2 Kings xxiii. 11.

[7] Ewald, *Gesch.*, vol. iii. pp. 664, 667.

temple,[1] and the altars built by Manasseh in both its forecourts shared the fate of all others, being broken down and thrown on the water of Kedron, after being reduced to dust.[2]

But now came a still more decisive blow at the traditions and corruptions of the past. Solomon had built various high places round Jerusalem, nearly four hundred years before—partly to please the many heathen princesses of his harem, but still more, perhaps, as a concession, intended to propitiate the heathen nations under his rule; intercourse with them being doubtless, large, for trade and other purposes. Respect for the great name of the wise king had hitherto kept them intact; even Hezekiah, as we have seen, not feeling strong enough to brave the prejudices of his people, by destroying them. All, however, now went down before the wave of religious enthusiasm. The citizens of Jerusalem no longer saw, on the south crest of Mount Olivet, or the other heights near at hand, the memorials of Ashtoreth the goddess of Sidon, or Chemosh, or Milcom, the national gods of Moab and Ammon. The Matzaiboth, or sacred stone pillars round them and their Asherahs, shared the general destruction: the very sites of each high place being polluted with human bones from the neighbouring graves.[3] The

[1] *Thenius. Keil.* Zeph. i. 5. Jer. xix. 13; xxxii. 29. There were buildings over some of the gates of the temple, Jer. xxxv. 4.

[2] In 2 Kings xvi. 18 the words "covert for the Sabbath" should, in Geiger's opinion, be read "molten images of the Shame"—*i.e.* of Baal. They, too, were the fruit of the reign of Ahaz.

[3] A recent critic thinks that the toleration of Solomon's high places by all the reforming kings till Josiah, proves that the Levitical laws were not known till Josiah's time. He assumes, they were then learned from the newly discovered Deuteronomy —"written shortly before." *Prophets of Israel*, vol. iii. pp. 112, 132, 164. But why is the action of Solomon condemned in "Kings,"

destruction and desecration of the great sanctuary of the Northern Kingdom, at Bethel, was apparently the last act in this crusade against idolatry. All the buildings connected with it were utterly destroyed;[1] their very stones broken in small pieces, and the Asherah burnt,[2] under the

if he transgressed no known law? It is useless to say that "Kings" was composed after the fall of the Kingdom. Its last chapters may have been so, but it is to trifle with the sacred documents to hint that they do not represent the feelings of the godly in Solomon's age, when they condemn some of his acts as abhorrent to his contemporaries, and entailing grievous results. As to Solomon or any other king acting contrary to the letter of the Law; do our kings act up to the letter or even the spirit of the Bible, though they certainly have it? Is the recklessness of a monarch—and he a despot—any proof that he knows no better? What, moreover, kept David from acting like Solomon? Simply that he honoured what Solomon ignored. One would think that to have a sacred law in a kingdom is to secure loyalty to its every detail! Such negative proof of the non-existence of the Law at an early date is a weak support for so great a conclusion. Yet it is gravely brought forward! See *Bible in Jewish Church*, p. 248.

It is further advanced, in the same connection, that Elijah sanctioned the worship of the golden calves of Bethel and Dan, and even of the Asherah, at Samaria (?) because we are not told of his denouncing them, and because they survived him. (*Prophets of Israel*, p. 96.) But to hint at the great prophet, austere and high-toned as he was, sanctioning the Asherah, is a very bold flight! As to the golden calves, his indifference can only be argued from the fact that in the very brief notice of his life, in which his great conflict with Baal-worship is the engrossing subject, nothing is said of them. But can he, who betook himself to Horeb, where the prohibition of all image worship was given; can he, to whom the spirituality of God was proclaimed with awful sublimity, in the vision vouchsafed him, have looked with favour on the image of the ox that eats grass, as a likeness or symbol of Jehovah? If even Moses was outraged by the introduction of a symbol of God, can we suppose Elijah less so? See *Gesetz und Propheten*, p. 53.

[1] 2 Kings xxiii. 19. [2] Wilkins' *Phœnicia and Israel*, p 153.

eyes of Josiah himself. Three hundred and fifty years had passed since Jeroboam had permanently shattered the religious unity of Israel, by building the rival temple, now laid in ruins; but the golden calf he had set up in it, as a symbol of Jehovah, had been carried off, a hundred years before, by the Assyrians, under Shalmaneser, as that at Dan had been by Tiglath-pileser II. Since then, worship had been maintained by priests selected without reference to their race, with a ritual taught at first by one sent for the purpose from Assyria;[1] the worship of Jehovah, as the local God, being associated with that of the idols of Assyria and of the various foreign heathen communities settled in the country by the conquerors.[2] As the fountain-head of the apostasy of their Northern brethren, and the long detested rival of the Temple of Jerusalem, this great sanctuary was the object of special abhorrence to the reformers. The skeletons of its priests, in ancient rock tombs at the foot of the hill, were dragged from their resting-places, and forthwith burnt on the altar, to pollute it for ever; an incident, it was noticed, wonderfully fulfilling the curse pronounced by the prophet who had appeared at Bethel, three hundred and fifty years before, when the sanctuary was inaugurated by Jeroboam. The denunciation had not been forgotten; and the tombstone[3] marking the common grave of the prophet and that of his brother seer who came to him from Samaria, were still pointed out in the valley.[4] Their bones alone were left undisturbed.

It would have been well if violence had been limited to the buildings and altars connected with idolatry. But the recollection of the persecution by Jezebel in the

[1] 2 Kings xvii. 28. [2] 2 Kings xvii. 33.
[3] For "title," 2 Kings xxiii. 17, read "tombstone."
[4] 1 Kings xiii. 31. 2 Kings xxiii. 17, 18.

north, and by Manasseh in the south, was still fresh, and had kindled a natural, but unhappy, thirst for revenge. A counter persecution was the result. While the priests of the high places in Judah, in deference to their descent from Aaron, had been only degraded; those of the Northern high places, men of all races, devoted to heathenism, with a hateful admixture of respect for Jehovah as a local deity, were everywhere ruthlessly slain on the very altars at which they had officiated;[1] a step as impolitic as it was cruel, since it infuriated the heathen party in Judah, and tended to provoke the reaction which set in after Josiah's death.

It is striking to find no notice of Jeremiah's name during the years in which this religious revolution was being carried out. Yet he was busily preaching all the while; a lengthy section of his prophecies, extending from the seventh to the tenth chapter of his Book, containing a condensed epitome of his addresses at this time.[2] The first of these seems to have been delivered at a temple service, to which multitudes had been attracted from all parts of Judah; the prophet seizing an opportunity so favourable of pressing home his earnest words, once more, on his fellow-countrymen. The energy of

[1] 2 Kings xxiii. 20.

[2] So Hitzig and Keil. Others think these chapters should be referred to the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim; but, as Knobel well says, the chronological sequence of Jeremiah's discourses is, confessedly, very uncertain. *Prophetismus*, vol. ii. p. 275. There is nothing in these chapters, however, that is inconsistent with their having been spoken during the progress of Josiah's reformation, before idolatry was, for the time, outwardly, quite put down. Chap. xxvi. is in some points a repetition of part of this discourse; but it is more natural to suppose the prophet repeating a statement, than that the same utterance should be given in two different chapters.

Josiah, the zeal of the reforming priests, and the exhortations of the prophets, had produced a great outward change. The temple, which had been allowed to fall into partial ruin under Manasseh, was again the centre of the ancient faith, and became more than ever the boast and superstitious trust of the nation. Having no moral basis for their heathen worship, which virtually regarded one god as good as another, or, at least as worth a trial, nothing was more natural than that the multitude should pass readily from the idol altars to that of Jehovah. Indeed, temporary adoptions of one god rather than another had necessarily been familiar, where such a multitude of deities—as numerous, in the case of Judah, as its towns—offered such rival claims to devotion. Many forms of worship, ceremonial, and sacrifice, had been crowded into Jerusalem under Ahaz, Manasseh, and Amon; the priests of each divinity having special books of their own rites, as was the case at Rome.[1] As in all other idolatrous countries, moreover, and in accordance with the very genius of heathenism, ritual constituted the soul and essence of religion. Formula and ceremony were omnipotent, and were held to compel the gods to accede to the desires of their votaries, if neither priest nor worshipper had vitiated them by error or omission.[2] While, therefore, even in the darkest times, the worship of Jehovah, as one of many gods, had never ceased, it would be a misconception of the fundamental ideas of the times, to suppose that the prominence assigned to Him in the public services under Josiah, implied an intelligent or spiritual appreciation of His infinite superiority to the gods He had for the time displaced. Nor is it possible to imagine even a passing enthusiasm for Jehovah, in that day, without

[1] Döllinger's *Gentile and Jew*, vol. ii. p. 15.
[2] *Ibid.*, vol. ii. p. 16.

minute and exact forms in His worship; for, to repeat what has just been said, the Jew, like all other peoples in antiquity, considered rites, in themselves, the beginning and end of religion; as every page of the prophets shows. To argue, therefore, that the Levitical ritual is of a very late origin, because Jehovah was always worshipped, more or less, by the Hebrews—while little is said of that ritual till the revulsion of national feeling against all idolatry, during the Captivity, brought it prominently to the front—is in violent contradiction to the ideas of those ages. It may have been corrupted by foreign admixtures, but that it existed and was more or less minutely observed, is implied in the very fact of Jehovah being worshipped at all,[1] for each god had *his own ritual*, without which, according to the notions of the times, no worship, whatever, *could* be rendered to Him.

Himself intensely religious in the truest sense, such a hollow and nominal recognition of the national faith was intensely abhorrent to Jeremiah. To him, the only proof of fidelity to God was a life governed by His fear, while

[1] Contrary to the theory in *Bible in Jewish Church*, pp. 117, 223, 225, 257, 273, 304, 371. "The conclusion is inevitable," says Dr. S., "that the ritual element," that is, the Books of Exodus and Leviticus, "which the Law adds to the prophetic doctrine of forgiveness, became part of the system of God's grace only after the prophets had spoken," that is, after Malachi! Another point on which Dr. Smith advances special views in connection with the discourse of Jeremiah, in chaps. vii. to x., is the forgiveness of sins. According to him, it was only offered to the nation, not to the individual, till the introduction of the Levitical ritual after the Exile. In the face of the language of the Psalms, this seems a bold assertion. But *could* the nation be treated as a personality under any moral system? Is it not made up of individuals, and must not forgiveness of a multitude, on certain moral conditions, imply that of the individuals of that multitude? *Bible in the Jewish Church*, p. 430.

to the community, as to other heathen peoples, religion was one thing and morality another, quite distinct. Jehovah, they held, was bound to be their Protector, if they duly and punctiliously observed the rites of His worship prescribed by His priests. To Jeremiah, the condition of His favour was the leading a godly life, in reverend and loving obedience to His moral law; ritual being important only as an outward expression of the religious affections. Taking his stand, therefore, at one of the gates of the temple, on an occasion when its courts were thronged by worshippers, he addressed them as follows, denouncing first their empty formalism and their dependence on lying prophets.

Hear the word of Jehovah,[1] ye who enter at these gates from all Judah to pray before Him. Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and doings, and I will let you continue to dwell in this place![2] Put no trust in the words of the lying prophets, who say, "These buildings are the temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah,"[3] as if the temple in itself, as the shrine of the present God, were enough to protect you from national danger:—a safeguard that could never be overthrown! It will *not* keep you from the exile threatened by God. But, if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye honestly do what is right between man and man; if ye do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless and the widow;[4] if ye shed no innocent blood in this place—Jerusalem—and do not walk after other gods, to your hurt—then I will let

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[1] Jer. vii. 1–7. [2] Deut. vii. 12–15.

[3] Repeated for emphasis: perhaps also in the fanatical excitement which marks Eastern religions. It may be compared with the cries of the priests of Baal on Carmel (1 Kings xviii. 26), or with the frenzy into which the dervishes of Islam work themselves, by the repetition of "Allah! Allah!" Stanley's *Jewish Church*, vol. ii. p. 254.

[4] Exod. xxii. 21. Deut. xxiv. 17.

you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever.

Behold,[1] you put your trust in lying words, which are worse than worthless. What! will ye steal, murder, commit adultery, perjure yourselves; burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye do not know,[2] and then come and enter into My presence, in this house, which is called by My name, and say, "we are safe from all danger; we may without risk practise all these abominations!" Is this house, which is called by My name, a den of robbers in your eyes?[3] I, even I, have seen this, says Jehovah.

But go ye to My place[4] at Shiloh,[5] where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it, for the wickedness of My people, Israel. And now, because ye have done all these things, says Jehovah—and I spoke to you, rising up early[6] to do so, but ye did not listen; calling you, but you did not answer—therefore I will do to *this* house, which is called by My name, and in which you trust, and to this place—the land which I gave to you and to your fathers—as I did to Shiloh, and cast *you* out of My sight as I cast out all your brethren, Ephraim, the people of the Northern Kingdom!

But thou,[7] Jeremiah, do not pray for this people, neither lift up cry nor supplication for them, and do not entreat Me for them, for I will not hear thee! Seest thou not what they do in the

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[1] Jer. vii. 8–11.

[2] Exod. xx. 2–17, a reference to the Ten Commandments.

[3] Matt. xxi. 13, Mark xi. 17. Luke xix. 46.

[4] Jer. vii. 12–15.

[5] See vol. ii. pp. 432 ff. An incidental reply occurs there to the strange remarks in *Bible in Jewish Church*, p. 257, on the alleged absence of the Levitical Law at Shiloh. The town was burnt by the Philistines.

[6] An allusion to the Eastern habit of rising early, while it is yet cool. The early morning is the most active time in the East. The people of India rise before daybreak. Bishop Heber copied them, rising and going out with Mrs. Heber for a ride, at 4 a.m., By 6 a.m. the sun was oppressively hot. *Journal*, vol. i. pp. 26, 101.

[7] Jer. vii. 16–20.

towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The sons gather pieces of wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes to the moon, the queen of heaven[1] and pour out drink offerings to other gods, to cause Me grief. But will they really cause Me grief? says Jehovah; will they not rather bring shame on their own faces? Therefore, thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold! My anger and My fury shall be poured out on this place—Jerusalem; on man and beast, on the trees of the field, and the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn and not be quenched.

The moral law had always taken precedence of the ceremonial, in the sight of God, but this had never been realized by Israel. He now, once more, proclaims the fact in the strongest language.

Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts,[2] the God of Israel, Take your whole-burnt-offerings —sacred to Me, and therefore to be tasted by none—and eat them like your ordinary sacrifices, which, except the small share for the altar and the priest, you yourselves eat. Use them like common flesh! You need not burn them on the altar. As long as your life is so unworthy, you may eat them all! They give me no pleasure when offered by such as you.[3] For I did not speak to your fathers, and I did not give them commands, in the day when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, simply that they might offer burnt offerings[4] and sacrifices,

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[1] These cakes were probably like those offered at Athens, at the full moon of the month Munychion, to the goddess Artemis. They were round, and had lights stuck in them. *Graf.* They were apparently of flour mixed with oil—perhaps spiced. Our hot cross buns have been traced, by some, to them.

[2] Jer. vii. 21–28. [3] Chap. vi. 20.

[4] In Deut. iv. 21, the same words translated "concerning," in Jer. vii. 22, are rendered, with the pronoun, "for your sakes." So in Gen. xx. 11, "for the sake of," and repeatedly "because of;" see Gen. xii. 17; xx. 18; xliii. 18; Exod. viii. 12; etc. Smend, a leader among the new critics, explains the passage thus: "Jeremiah says that Jehovah had spoken to the Israelites, and given them counsels, less with the view to their offering

but, before I gave any laws respecting these, I commanded them

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sacrifices to Him than that they should obey Him. "*Moses apud Prophetas*, p. 34. A correct paraphrase of the verse would be: "I did not give them commands to the end that they should offer sacrifices to Me (though this also was to be done); My supreme object was that they should obey Me." See *Bredenkamp*, pp. 108 ff. This verse has been represented by the new school of critics, as proving that sacrifice was unknown in the Mosaic age, and that the Levitical books of the Old Testament could not have existed in Jeremiah's day. But (1) Jeremiah expressly notices regularly instituted sacrifices, chaps. vi. 20; vii. 21; xiv. 12; xvii. 26; xxxiii. 18; so does Amos, v. 22; so, also Hosea iv. 8, where "to eat the sin of My people," is understood by Delitzsch, and others, as meaning, to eat their sin offerings; so, Micah vi. 6, 7. See besides, Ps. xl. 6; l. 8; li. 19; Isa. i. 11.

(2) The constant condemnation of merely formal sacrifice unaccompanied by a fitting moral condition on the part of the offerer, implies a long established practice. Even Isaiah and the prophets before him, recognise it thus. Joel, whom so extreme a critic as Reuss (*Les Prophètes.*—Introd.) accepts as the earliest of the prophets, speaks of sacrifices and of priests, etc., chap. i. 13. See also Reuss, *Gesch. d. Heil. Schrift. d. A. T.*, 1881, p. 243.

(3) The fact that Jeremiah constantly appeals to Deuteronomy —supposed by the new critics to have been written very shortly before its discovery in the eighteenth year of Josiah—proves that he had no idea of saying that sacrifices did not exist in the early days of the nation, for they are alluded to in Deut. xii. 6; xi. 13; xiv. 27; and are there enforced or noticed by Moses himself, with his own lips, as one of his institutions.

(4) The words of Jer. vii. 22, are, in fact, in great measure a quotation from Deut. xxix. 12; Exod. vi. 7.

The number of passages already quoted which speak of sacrifices might be largely increased, see *e.g.* Isa. lxvi. 3; 1 Sam. xv. 22; Prov. xxi. 27. All these, and the others given before, have the same idea as the text, Jer. vii. 22, that the whole Levitical economy, as such, is of no value apart from morality on the part of the worshipper. The prophet, and the whole Old Testament, in fact, are at one in denying any sacramental efficacy to a mere rite. They deny that it has any spiritual worth whatever, simply

saying, "Obey My voice,[1] and I will be your God, and ye shall be My people, and walk in all the way which I have commanded you, that it may be well with you."[2] But they hearkened not,

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in itself. To them the act of the priest conferred no benefit on the offerer, except when it was the outward sign of inward spiritual grace. But that is very different from saying that sacrifice had not been instituted.

Keil's remarks are good: "Obey (hear) My voice, etc.," reminds us at once of Exod. xix. 5, and Exod. vi. 7; Lev. xxvi. 12; Deut. xxvi. 18. The phrase "in all the way, etc.," occurs only once again in Scripture, and that in Deut. v. 30. Jeremiah had clearly in his mind the promulgation of the Decalogue from Sinai, and in this, written by the finger of God, there is no reference to whole burnt offerings or sacrifices. The sense must be, "God did not, in making the covenant with Israel, speak respecting matters of whole burnt offering and sacrifice—but." *Commentar über Jeremia*, p. 121; *Oehler*, in *Herzog*, vol. xii. p. 228. Dr. E. G. A. Riehm, one of the greatest living Biblical critics, says in reference to Jer. vii. 22; "The basis on which Jehovah had made a covenant with their fathers, when He led them from Egypt, was not the demand for offerings, but for their obedience. If they rendered *that*, He would be their God, and they His people. This agrees with Deuteronomy and with the representations of the other books of the Pentateuch. They make the covenant be concluded before the laws of sacrifice were delivered. It is impossible that Jeremiah did not know of a sacrificial legislation given by God at Sinai, or that no book about it should have existed, for Deuteronomy, which Jeremiah almost exclusively used, presupposes the existence of the Levitical Law. As Isaiah, in writing iv. 5, had undoubtedly before his mind Exod. xl. 38, so Jeremiah shows his acquaintance with the Levitical Laws. See Jer. ii. 3, compared with Lev. xxii. 10; xii. 16. Jer. xxxii. 7, compared with Lev. xxv. 25. Jer. xxxiv. 8, compared with Lev. xxv. 10, 40. His contemporary, Ezekiel, also, often shows the same acquaintance with the Levitical legislation. Ezek. iv. 14; xxii. 26, etc." *Studien und Kritiken*, 1868, pp. 369 ff.

[1] Exod. xix. 5. Lev. xxvi. 12.

[2] That is, the moral law preceded the ceremonial, as the more important, and the covenant relations between God and Israel

and did not incline their ear, but walked in the counsels and stubbornness of their wicked heart, and turned their back to Me, not their face. From the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt, to this day, I have sent you all My servants, the prophets; sending them day by day eagerly.[1] Yet they hearkened not to Me, nor inclined their ear, but stiffened their neck, refusing to bow to Me, and behaved worse than their fathers. And even now, when thou, Jeremiah, speakest all these words to them, they will not listen to thee; when thou callest to them they will not answer thee. Say, therefore, to them: "This is the people that does not obey the voice of Jehovah their God, nor accept correction; fidelity to Him is gone;[2] it has died on their lips."[3]

For such incurable apostasy and wickedness, Jehovah has finally cast off His rebellious people, and left them to perish in shame.

Cut off thy hair, which is thy diadem,[4] O daughter of Zion, and throw it away, and raise lamentations on the bare hills, for Jehovah has rejected and cast off the generation against which He is wroth. For the children of Judah have done evil in My sight, says Jehovah;[5] they have set up their abominations in the

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were based on their obedience to it, and not on their exact observance of ceremonies and forms.

[1] Lit., "From the early morning, etc." [2] Jer. v. 1.

[3] They still pretended fidelity, and gave lip homage—but it was hollow and worthless.

[4] Jer. vii. 29–31. This was a sign of mourning. Job i. 20. Mic. i. 16.

[5] The idol worship in ver. 18 was private; that in this verse is public and official, But as Josiah had put down state idolatry in his twelfth year, B.C. 628, the state of things under Manasseh, which had never been repented of, must be referred to. In fact, heathenism appears to have broken out wherever possible, even after Josiah's Reformation, as seems hinted in verses 17, 18. In ver. 18 they burn incense to the queen of heaven. The idols of Manasseh had been put back, after his death, into the temple, 2 Kings xxi. 7; 2 Chron xxxiii. 7; and the high places, which

House which is called by My name, to pollute it. And they have built the high altars of the Tophet, in the valley of Benhinnom,[1] to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into My heart.

Therefore behold the days come,[2] says Jehovah, when men will no more say "The Tophet,"[3] or the "Valley of Benhinnom,"[4] but "the Valley of Slaughter;" for the scene of their crime will become that of their punishment, and the dead will be so many that they will have to bury them even in Tophet, polluted though it be, for want of room elsewhere.[5] Ay, more than this! Many will have to be left unburied, the last and deepest of calamities to a Jew. The corpses of this people will be meat for the birds of heaven, and for the wild beasts of the earth, and no one will scare them away! And I will cause the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride,[6] to cease from the towns of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, for they shall be made a desolation. When the enemy invades you, moreover, saith Jehovah,[7] they will desecrate the graves, in search of the costly ornaments and relics buried with the dead,[8] and will take the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of her princes, and the bones of the

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had been levelled with the ground (2 King xxiii.), had been rebuilt (vii. 30, 31) to propitiate the wrath of Moloch, by offerings of children, as often happened in times of great public danger (2 Kings iii. 27; Micah vi. 6, 7); a worship which repeated all the sins of the past (xxxii. 35). The whole passage seems to hint at popular tumults and reactions, under Josiah, to reinstate idolatry.

[1] *Land and Book*, pp. 641–2.

[2] Jer. vii. 32, to viii. 3. [3] Isa. xxx. 33.

[4] Hinnom is derived by Jarchi from Naham "to groan," but it occurs as early as Josh. xv. 8.

[5] The Valley of Benhinnom is narrow, with steep and rugged rocks on both sides. It bounded Jerusalem on the west and south, running finally into the valley of the Kedron, which extended north and south on the east of the city.

[6] See page 300. [7] Jer. viii. 1 ff.

[8] It was the habit to bury costly things with the dead, in Egypt. *Salv. de Sacy*, quoted by Hitzig, *Jeremia*, p. 66. So, elsewhere.

priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the citizens of Jerusalem, from their graves, and they will scatter them on the earth, before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they loved and served, and after whom they walked, and whom they sought and worshipped; they will not even be collected for burial, but will be for manure on the face of the earth. And death will be chosen rather than life, by all the remnant of this evil race, who survive in all the parts to which I have driven them away, says Jehovah of Hosts.[1]

The prophet now breaks out afresh in his lament over the inveterate wickedness of his people, and the terribleness of the judgments impending over them.

Thus says Jehovah:[2] If one fall, will he not rise again? If he turn aside, will he never come back? Why, then, does this people of Jerusalem turn away from Me in abiding apostasy, holding fast to delusion, refusing[3] to return? I listened and heard, they speak what is not right—to no one is his wickedness a trouble, so that he should say, "What have I done?" Every one presses on in the course he is running,[4] like the horse rushing to the battle. Even the stork in the heavens knows her appointed times to return from migration; the turtle dove, and the swift, and the crane, keep to the time of their reappearing;[5] but my people know not the law[6] of Jehovah. How can ye then say, "We are the wise, we have the law[7] of Jehovah"? Assuredly the false pen

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[1] See Lev. xxvi. 36–39. Deut. xxviii. 65–67.

[2] Jer. viii. 4–13.

[3] Lit., "loathing, scorning."

[4] Lit., "into his running."

[5] All these are migratory birds. On the migratory birds of Palestine, see *Land and Book*, pp. 324–6. The stork is not seen in winter, but abounds from the end of March to the beginning of May. It then passes on still further to the north. The turtle dove is seen only from spring to autumn. The appearance of the swallow marks the return of spring as in England. The crane comes in the end of March or the beginning of April. *Tristram.*

[6] Ordinance. [7] The Torah.

of the scribes[1] has acted deceitfully; for their written revelations

[1] The new school of critics hold that this verse is "the oldest witness to the unhistorical character of the Pentateuch." Vatke, *Theologie*, p. 220. Graf maintains that the law which "The Wise" boasted of possessing was the *oral*, not the written law, and that the lying pen was that of false prophets, perhaps also of priests; busy with the pen as well as the tongue, to rock the people into false security. If, however, it were the *written* law, the explanation of Ewald is amply satisfactory, that the prophet only complains of its misstatement and falsification; not of the writing of new books, of pretended Mosaic authorship. For who can say that the Pentateuch, in whole or part, is a composition which could have served the ends of these "lying prophets"? See *Bredenkamp*, p. 108. Keil, quoting Hitzig, thinks it was undoubtedly the written law. But if they tried to falsify the law, no further proof is needed that it was already in existence, and that it is not of late date. Hitzig's words are: "The second half of the verse shows that the written law is meant, and that by the possession of this they think themselves wise; that is, think they know how to propitiate God and avert all danger. It is, however, the ceremonial law, by which they regulate public worship, see vii. 21, while the living word of Jehovah demands something else from them, vii. 3." Naegelsbach asks pertinently, if the lying prophets opposed Jeremiah's words with other words, why should they not have opposed his written prophecies with other prophecies of their own, palming them off falsely as the utterances of Jehovah? See Isa. x. i. See also Rosenmüller's *Scholia in Jerem.*, vol. i. p. 276. Jeremiah's constant reference to Deuteronomy, which, as will be shown hereafter, is, throughout, based on the other legislative books of the Pentateuch, shows clearly that he, at least, did not believe that these were, any of them, fictions. The "scribes," as afterwards known, did not rise till after the return from Babylon. Graetz says: "The prophet reproaches the people, or rather the kings, princes, priests, and false prophets, with having set up an abomination in the Temple, etc. (vii. 30), and thus acting entirely contrary to the law, while they yet maintained that they were wise, and had God's teaching. The conclusion of ver. 9 is, 'they reject God's word and what wisdom have they'? Therefore the prophet does not accuse them of falsifying

in opposition to those of true prophets are lies. But "the wise" will be ashamed, confounded, and caught! Lo, they have despised the word of Jehovah, and whose wisdom have they if they have not His? I will, therefore, give their wives to others, their fields to new heirs; for, from the least to the greatest, they all seek after gain; from the prophet to the priest, they all deal falsely. And the false prophets treat the wound of the daughter of My people as if it were slight, saying, "All is well, All is well," when all is wrong. The men of Judah should be ashamed for having done abomination, yet they are not at all ashamed, neither do they blush; therefore they will lie amongst the slain; they will fall in the time of their visitation, saith Jehovah.[1] I will gather them and sweep them away, saith Jehovah, for there are no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf is faded; My people yield no fruit to Me, and I will give them to them who shall invade them.[2]

The terror created by the judgment soon to break over Judah, is now depicted.

"Why do we sit still?"[3] will they say. "Assemble yourselves, and let us enter the fortified towns and there die in the end,[4] rather than fall by the sword at once. For Jehovah our God has willed

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the law, but attacks the boasting of those who pretend to know the law, and act contrary to it. In this sense must ver. 8 be explained thus, 'The law has become vain,' or 'God has made it in vain,' 'a useless pen is the pen of the scribes' (who copy the law). The prophet therefore speaks ironically, not of the falsification of the law, but of its being made vain, since it is not practised. The law was in existence, scribes copied it and spread it, but it was not followed." *Geschichte*, vol. ii. p. 474.

[1] *De Wette.*

[2] Lit., "pass over." Ewald renders this clause, "and I gave them what they have transgressed, (the law)." Sachs, "and what I gave them passes away from them."

[3] Jer. viii. 14–17.

[4] Hitzig renders it "perish" (through hunger and pestilence) rather than by the sword of the enemy." So Ewald, De Wette, Keil, Naegelsbach, Rosenmüller, Streane. Eichhorn, "lament in silence." Sachs, "be silent." So Noyes.

that we perish, and has given us poison-water[1] to drink, because we have sinned against Jehovah. We hope for good, but evil has come; for a time of healing, and, behold, terror! The snorting of the enemy's horse is heard from Dan, in the far north; the whole land trembles at the neighing of his cavalry.[2] They come and consume the land, and all that is in it; the city, and those that dwell in it. For, behold, I send among you an army terrible as serpents—great yellow vipers,[3] which cannot be charmed,[4] and they will bite you, saith Jehovah.

O what can cheer[5] me in my sorrow![6] My heart in me is sick! Lo, the cry of the daughter of my people sounds aloud from a far country. "Is Jehovah not in Zion? Is her King not in her?" But Jehovah will answer, "Why have they provoked Me to anger with their graven images, and with foreign idols?" Then the people will say, "The harvest is past, the fruit-gathering is ended, and we are not saved."

The deepest sorrow oppresses the prophet at the thought of the ruin of his people.

By[7] the destruction[8] of the daughter of my people, I myself

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[1] Mai rosh, "poppy juice," *Gesenius*. Jeremiah uses the same words in ix. 14, and xxiii. 15. Rosh is the name of a poisonous plant. Deut. xxix. 18, marg., "a poisonful herb;" xxxii. 33, "venom." Job xx. 16, "poison." Hos. x. 4, "hemlock." In Deut. xxxii. 32, we learn that it had "grapes;" from Hos. x. 4, that it was a quick-growing weed of the corn-fields. It was evidently a bitter plant, from being often joined with wormwood (Deut. xxix. 18; Jer. ix. 15, etc.). It was most probably the poppy. Tristram, *N. H. of Bible*, p. 447. It is rendered "poison-water" by Ewald, Sachs, Naegelsbach; "water of hemlock," Noyes; "bitter water," Eichhorn; "poison," Hitzig. Streane thinks it was the deadly nightshade. The margin reads "poison."

[2] "Stallions" in the Hebrew. [3] *Tristram.*

[4] For a notice of serpent charmers in Palestine, see *Land and Book*, pp. 154, 155. A very full account of those in Barbary is given in Drummond Hay's *Western Barbary*, chap. ix.

[5] Lit. "brighten." *Graf. Ewald.* [6] Jer. viii. 18-20.

[7] Jer. viii. 21-ix. 1. [8] Lit., "shattering, breaking in pieces."

am destroyed! I am in sadness:[1] horror has seized me! Is there no balm in Gilead?[2] No physician there? Why then is no bandage applied to the wound of the daughter of my people? O that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night, for the slain of the daughter of my people

Interior of an Eastern Caravanserai.

[1] Lit., "I am black," *i.e.* I go about in the black unwashed robes of a mourner.

See *Land and Book*, pp. 466–7. The balm of Gilead was probably the produce of the opobalsamum, now cultivated at Mecca. Its native country seems to be the east coast of Africa. It was formerly grown with great care round Jericho, where Cleopatra had an imperial guard set over the garden in which her balsam trees grew. *Tristram*, p. 338. Kneucker says it is indigenous to South Arabia, and that it is a plant of three or four feet high, evergreen, with fleshy white flowers the size of those of a pea. The balm flows, from punctures in the twigs, in thick drops, strongly aromatic, reminding one of the smell of turpentine,

But the ruin of the kingdom is only the inevitable result of the wickedness of the people: that, above all, calls forth the deepest laments.

O that I had[1] in the wilderness some poor shelter of wanderers ;[2] I would leave my people and go from them, for they are all adulterers,[3] a band of treacherous men. They bend their tongue as if it were their bow, to shoot out lies, and they do not rule honestly in the land; for they go on from wickedness to wickedness, and know not Me, says Jehovah. Be on your guard, every one, against his neighbour, and trust not in any brother ; for every brother is crafty as Jacob,[4] and every neighbour goes about to slander. Every man deceives his neighbour, and, as to truth, they never speak it; they use their tongues to speak lies; they weary themselves in committing iniquity. "Thou dwellest, O Jeremiah," says Jehovah, "in the midst of faithlessness. Through faithlessness they refuse to know Me."

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and of a bitter, astringent taste. At first colourless, it turns a pale yellow and even red. *Bib. Lex.*, art. *Balsam.*

[1] **Jer. ix. 2-6.** In the Heb. the 9th chapter begins with the 2nd verse of the A. V.

[2] Ps. lv. 6, 7. Small "shelters" of only bare walls and a roof, are found—where indeed they are most needed—in the dreariest desert. Furrer, *Palästina*, p. 228. Large "khans" enclose a square court, and are commonly only one storey high, and of stone. Though not always clean or comfortable, their shelter is precious. The court, on the four sides of which the khan is built, is for cattle. There is always a well in the centre. Travellers can put their baggage or goods in the chambers of the building, which are, however, unfurnished, only the key and a sleeping mat being provided. But the green shade round the central well, or fountain, gives a soothing repose after the toils of the way through the desert. Grundt, *Bibel Lex.*, vol. iii. p. 14. The word used here is rendered "inn" in Gen. xlii. 27 ; xliii. 21 ; Exod. iv. 24.

[3] In many cases literally so; in all, guilty of idolatry, *i.e.* breach of the covenant between Israel and God, which is compared to that of marriage.

[4] "Is a thorough Jacob." *Speaker's Comment.* The Hebrew words are "Akob Yakob."

Therefore,[1] thus says Jehovah of Hosts, Behold, I will melt them in the furnace, and try them as metal is tried; for how else can I do with the daughter of My people? Their slanderous tongue is a deadly arrow[2]—it speaks treacherously; with his mouth a man speaks peaceably to his neighbour, but in his heart he is plotting against him. Shall I not visit them for such things? says Jehovah. Shall not My soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

For the mountains[3] will I raise a weeping and wailing: for the wilderness pasture grounds a lamentation, because they are burned up with drought, so that no one passes over them, and the voice of the flocks is no longer heard; the birds of the air and the wild beasts are fled and gone! And Jehovah has said, I will turn Jerusalem into heaps of ruins—a dwelling of jackals, and I will make the towns of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant. Who is the *truly* "wise man?"[4] he will understand this. Who is he to whom the mouth of Jehovah has spoken? he will make it known. Why is the country doomed to ruin—to be made desolate like the wilderness, so that none will pass through it? Jehovah has made it known: because they have forsaken My Law,[5] which I laid before them,[6] and have not obeyed My voice, nor walked in the Law,[7] but have walked after the stubbornness of their heart, and after the Baals[8] whose worship their fathers taught them; therefore, Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel, has said, Behold, I will feed them—even this people—on wormwood, and give them poison-water to drink. I will scatter them among the nations whom neither they nor their fathers have known, and send the sword after them, till I have destroyed them.

Consider,[9] says Jehovah of Hosts, and call for the public mourning women, that they come; send for the best trained of them,[10] and make haste to raise a wailing for us, that our eyes may run

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[1] Jer. ix. 7-9. [2] *Gesenius.*

[3] Jer. ix. 10-16.

[4] "Not one of those who call themselves so." Chap. viii. 8.

[5] Torah. [6] Deut. xxx. 11-14.

[7] A. V. "Therein." The gender of the Heb. shows that *law* not *voice* is the antecedent.

[8] Used as a general name for their idols.

[9] Jer. ix. 17-22. [10] Lit., "the wise."

down with tears, and our eyelashes drip with weeping.[1] For a loud wailing sounds out of Zion! "Oh, how are we laid waste and put to great shame! We must leave our native land! They have thrown down our dwelling-places!" Hear, ye women, the word of Jehovah; let your ear receive the word of His mouth, and teach your daughters a song of wailing, and every one her neighbours a dirge of lamentation, for the hired mourning women will not suffice; for death is come in through our lattice windows:[2] he comes into our loftiest houses;[3] he has already cut off the children in the lanes, and the young men in the streets.[4] And the dead bodies of men shall fall on the open field, and lie there like manure, or like the handful dropped by the reaper, which no one picks up.

But now, once more, the prophet repeats his counsels as to the true course to be followed.

Thus says Jehovah.[5] Let not "the wise man" glory in his

[1] The custom of hiring mourners is very ancient. Jeremiah alludes to it in chap. ix. 17, 18. Every particular in these verses is still observed at funerals. There are in every city and community, women exceedingly "cunning" in this business. These are always sent for, and stay in the house, ready, when a fresh company of sympathizers come in, to "make haste" and take up a wailing, that the newly come may the more easily unite their tears with those of the mourners. They know the domestic history of every one, and immediately strike up an impromptu lamentation, in which they introduce the names of those relatives who have recently died, touching some tender chord in every heart, and thus each one weeps for his own dead, and the performance, which would otherwise be difficult or impossible becomes easy and natural. *Land and Book*, p. 103.

[2] The doors are kept shut fast in times of mortal sickness, and therefore death, like a thief, has clambered up and entered through the window.

[3] Lit. "palaces."

[4] The words "Speak, Thus saith the Lord," ver. 22, are omitted by Sept., Ewald, and Graf. If retained, they may be translated, "Declare it, saith Jehovah."

[5] Jer. ix. 23-26.

wisdom, or the strong in his strength, or the rich in his riches. But rather let him that glories glory in this—that he understands and knows Me, that I am Jehovah, who exercise loving kindness, justice, and righteousness on the earth; for in these I delight, says Jehovah. Behold, days come, says Jehovah, that I will punish all the circumcised who are only outwardly so,[1] and not in the heart. Egypt and Judah and Edom, and the B'nai Ammon, and Moab, and all that have their hair shaved off at the corners, and from their ears and temples,[2]—who live in the wilderness; for all the heathen are uncircumcised, and so, also, is the whole House of Israel.[3]

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[1] Ewald rightly renders the words "the uncircumcised circumcised." Keil also gives the true meaning, as in the text.

[2] Keil, "with hair cut at the corners." The rendering in the text is that of Gesenius, followed by most. In Lev. xix. 27, it is said, "Ye shall not round off (cut in a circle) the extremity of your beard and hair; nor shalt thou shave the extremity (corner) of thy beard." Lev. xxi. 5, says, "Nor shall they shave off the extreme corner of their beard." The Mahometans in the East trim the corners of the beard; the Jews do not. The words in the text are lit. "clipped as to the locks." This is said, apparently in contempt, of the Arabs of the desert, whom Herodotus describes (iii. 8.) as wearing their hair cut in this way. The tribe referred to, it would seem, from chap. xlix. 32, compared with ver. 28, belonged to the Kedarenes, who were descendants of Ishmael. Gen. xxv. 13. In Homer, *Il.*, ii. 542, the Abantes are said to comb back their hair and let it hang behind. It was the custom of these people to shave the fore part of their head, that their enemies might not be able to seize them by the hair; the hinder part they left long, as a valiant race who would never turn their back. *Trollope's Iliad*, vol. i. p. 114. The words of Herodotus in the passage already referred to are, "they wear their hair clipped round about, shaving it all round the temples." The Sept. render the phrase "that shaves his face round about." Niebuhr says that some Arab tribes still shave the temples and over the ears. *Descrip. de l'Arab.*, p. 59.

[3] Circumcision was practised by the priests at least, in Egypt, from very early times. But the people were not circumcised. The Ishmaelites let the rite fall into disuse, and were forced to submit to it at a later time, by the Jews. We know nothing of the

Josiah was doing his utmost to cleanse the land from every trace of idolatry, but the hearts of the people responded faintly to his efforts. Their fathers and themselves had yielded to every form of superstition, and it was impossible to eradicate these at once. Jeremiah, therefore, again tries to show them the folly of the heathen practices they cherished.

Hear the word that Jehovah speaks to you, O House of Israel.[1] Thus says Jehovah! Do not conform to the way of the heathen, and be not terrified at the signs of the heavens, because the heathen, falling on their faces, are terrified at them.[2] For the ways of the heathen nations are folly. For an idol is only a block of wood cut from a tree in the *yaar*;[3] the work of the hands of the woodcarver, shaping it with his axe. It is covered with plates of silver and gold, to adorn it, and then fastened with nails and hammers, to keep it steady. It stands stiff and immoveable as a scarecrow in a garden of cucumbers.[4] Idols do not speak; they must

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Moabites or Ammonites being circumcised. The idea seems to be: The heathen will be punished as heathen, that is, as failing to recognise even so much of God as natural religion teaches. The Jews, though circumcised outwardly, will be punished, because they are not circumcised in heart—that is, because their religion is only external and formal.

[1] Jer. x. 1-5. Judah is called "Israel," now that the Ten Tribes are gone.

[2] The whole system of astrology and divination by indications and phenomena in the heavens, is alluded to—such as unusual appearances of the sun, moon or stars, the appearance of comets, and the position of stars, the look of the clouds, etc. See Lenormant's *Divination*, pp. 65, 66.

[3] See vol. iv. p. 358. Lit., "for it is wood one cuts from the *yaar*."

[4] In the Epistle of Jeremy, v. 70, the phrase in the Hebrew text is evidently alluded to, and the rendering given as above. The Hebrew words are only two in number. Tomer, a palm tree, or the trunk of one, or, a post—and Mikshah, which means either "turned work," or, as a distinct word (Isa. i. 8), a garden of cucumbers. Mövers, and Graf, and Naegelsbach, render it as in the

be carried, for they cannot walk. Be not afraid of them, for they can do you no hurt, neither is it in them to do you any good![1]

There is no one at all like Thee, O Jehovah;[2] great art Thou, and Thy name is great in might! Who shall not fear Thee, Thou King of the nations, for such fear is but Thy due.[3] For among all the wise of the nations, in all their kingdoms, there is no one at all like Thee! But all the wise together are brutish, like cattle, and but fools. The religion of idols is folly;[4] it is but wood, like themselves! Silver plates, to lay on the wooden shapes, are brought from Tarshish in Spain, by the Tyrians, and gold from Uphaz,[5]

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text. Keil, Ewald, Eichhorn, Streane, Sachs, Noyes and Hitzig translate it, "like a pillar of turned wood." Hitzig, however, is rather in favour of the other rendering.

[1] This passage closely resembles expressions of Isaiah in chapters xlvi. 7; xlv. 20; xli. 23; xliv. 10. That the writer of these chapters could have borrowed from Jeremiah is impossible, from the differences of style. Jeremiah must, therefore, have been the borrower, and in that case these chapters must have been written before his day; and the whole theory of their later origin is refuted. The idea of the passage having been inserted in Jeremiah by a late author is also contradicted by its appearing in the Septuagint. That version is indeed even fuller than the Hebrew. It runs thus—It is a tree cut out of the forest; the work of the carpenters, or a molten image. They are beautified with silver and gold; they fix them with hammers and nails; they will set them up that they may not move. It is wrought silver, they will not walk; forged silver. From Tarshish is brought gold of Mophaz, and the work of goldsmiths. They are all the work of craftsmen; they will be clothed with blue and purple. They must be carried, for they cannot ride. Fear them not, for they cannot do any evil, and there is no good in them. Jer. x. 3–5. Verse 9 of the Hebrew is thus transposed in the Greek.

[2] **Jer. x. 6–10.**

[3] "For Thine is all power." *Eichhorn. Well.*

[4] The folly and shamefulness of idolatry is often urged in Scripture. Ps. lxxiii. 20. Jer. xxii. 28. Hos. ix. 10. Jer. xi. 13. 1 Sam. xii. 21. See Wilton's *Negeb*, p. 182.

[5] Kneucker thinks Uphaz was an Indian colony in Yemen, South Arabia. *Bibel Lex.*, vol. v. p. 581. Gesenius fancies it is

which the artist prepares, and the hands of the goldsmith. Their robes are of blue and red-purple: they are all, only the work of skilled artists. But Jehovah is God in truth; He is the Living God and the Eternal King: before His wrath the earth trembles, and the nations cannot abide His indignation.

Thus shall ye say to them,[1] May the gods who have not made heaven and earth vanish from the earth, and from under these heavens! Jehovah made the earth by His power; He has established the habitable world by His wisdom, and by His omniscience He has spread out the heavens. At His thunder-voice, the waters in the heavens are in tumult; He causes the clouds to ascend from the end of the earth; He makes the lightnings which lead on the rain,[2] and brings forth the wind from its store chambers.[3] Every man, whatever his wisdom, stands confounded before this spectacle; every goldsmith is ashamed of the graven image he has made, for his molten image is a lie; it has no breath in it. The idols are vain; the work of folly; in the time of their visitation they perish. But Jehovah, the Portion of Jacob,[4] is not like these; He is the Former of all things and He has chosen Israel as

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the same as Ophir. The *Speaker's Comm.*, supposes it was on or near the river Hyphasis (now the Gharra); the south-east boundary of the Punjaub. Mühlau and Volck say that the locality is unknown.

[1] Jer. x. 11-16. Verse 11 is written in Chaldee. Bleek, Hitzig and Keil accept it as genuine. It was perhaps written in the dialect of the common people as a proverbial saying, or as the very words they would use, in exile, respecting the gods of Babylon.

[2] Zech. x. 1. For "bright clouds" read "lightning." Ps. xxix. 10

[3] 1 Kings xviii. 45. Job xxxviii. 22.

[4] Modern criticism quotes this title of Jehovah (*Bible in Jewish Church*, p. 272) to show that He was regarded by the Hebrews as only their tribal God, as Chemosh was that of the Moabites. Yet the very next words proclaim Him the Creator of all things, which no tribal god pretended to be. No idol, moreover, is more than a piece of wood—a lie; but Jehovah reigns over heaven and earth. Is this a description of a "tribal God"? It is sad to have to notice such an attempt to bring the religion of the Bible to the level of ancient local idolatries.

the tribe of His inheritance; His own peculiar people! Jehovah of Hosts is His name.

Now, once more, however, the vision of judgment, even on this favoured race, looms before the eyes of the prophet.

Gather together out of the land thy goods, packed up in bundles, for flight,[1] O thou that sittest in Zion, the besieged city.[2] For thus says Jehovah, Behold, I will, this time, cast forth the inhabitants of the land like a stone from a sling, and will hem them into the city, so that their enemy will find them out. "Woe is me! I am sore hurt!" will you cry, in that day. "My wound[3] is incurable! This, this is my trouble," said I, the daughter of Zion, "and I must bear it. My tent is spoiled; its cords that held it up are broken; my children go forth from me, and are not; there is no one left to set up my tent again, or stretch out its coverings."

The cause of such a fate is now repeated by the prophet.

All this has happened, because the leaders of the people,[4] its shepherds, have grown dull of heart, and have not sought Jehovah. Therefore they have not acted wisely, and all their flock is scattered. Hark! a rumour! behold, it spreads! Hark! a great sound of an army[5] advancing from the north country, to make the cities of Judah desolate—a dwelling of jackals!

In that day Zion will cry:

"I know, O Jehovah,[6] that the way of man is not in his own hands; it is not given to him as he walks, to make his steps sure.[7] O Jehovah! chasten me, but only in measure;[8] not in

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[1] Lit., "thy package"; the folded-up bundle of what had been saved, to carry with them to their captivity. [2] Jer. x. 17-20.

[3] Lit., "for my breach" = breaking up. It is rendered "destruction," chap. iv. 6.

[4] Jer. x. 21, 22. [5] Isa. ix. 5. [6] Jer. x. 23-25.

[7] The same word occurs in Psalm xxxvii. 23. "The steps of a good man *are ordered* by the Lord."

[8] In chap. xlix. 2, the same word as is used here is translated, "I will correct thee *in measure*." So Eichhorn renders it.

Thine anger, lest Thou bring me to nothing. Pour out Thy fury on the nations that know Thee not; that call not upon Thy name! For they have devoured Jacob; they have devoured and consumed him, and have made his dwelling desolate.[1]

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[1] This verse occurs almost exactly in Ps. lxxix. 6, 7, which was probably written after the Captivity. The words would apply equally well to the days of Nebuchadnezzar, or to those of Antochus Epiphanes. Dean Perowne, *Introd. to the Psalms.*

Delitzsch, *Die Psalmen.* These final clauses must therefore have been quoted by the writer of the psalm. That they are a later addition to the prophet is scarcely conceivable when we remember the superstitious care taken of the Sacred Text by the later Jews.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE FINDING OF THE BOOK OF THE LAW.

WHILE Jeremiah was striving, by every form of earnest persuasion, to bring about such a moral reformation as, alone, would make the official changes in religion, effected by Josiah, of any real worth, an event occurred in the year B.C. 624, which permanently affected the spiritual history of Israel.

Eighteen years had passed since the king's accession, though he was still only a young man of twenty-six. The whole country had been cleared of its high places and other heathen or superstitious disfigurements, and the temple was rapidly being repaired and restored to its ancient uses, under a commission, consisting of Hilkiah, the high priest; Shaphan, the king's secretary[1] or minister of finance;[2] Maaseiah, the Sar,[3] or governor of Jerusalem, and Joah, the king's Mazkir, or keeper of the state archives.[4] While engaged in their duties,

[1] *Keil.* [2] Ewald, *Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 697.

[3] Sar is translated elsewhere in the A.V. "prince," "chief captain," "chief ruler," "captain."

[4] Keil, *Einleitung*, p. 700. The word means, lit. "the remembrancer," and the office entailed the duty of bringing before the king the public business to be done, and to counsel him respecting it. *Thenius*, on 1 Kings iv. 3.

Hilkiah came upon a manuscript roll, which proved to be a copy of "the Book of the Torah, or Law, of Jehovah, by the hand of Moses."[1] In what part of the temple it was found is not stated, but the discovery took place when the commissioners were removing the money gathered to repair the temple,[2] from the chests in which it had been stored; which may mark either when the Book was found, or the place where it was discovered. In the days of Christ, it was believed that the king had sent Hilkiah to get what money remained, after the restoration of the temple, to melt into cups, dishes, etc., for the sacred ministrations, and that while he was bringing it out he lighted upon "the Holy Books of Moses."[3] The Rabbinical tradition is, that "the Book" was found beneath a heap of stones, under which it had been hidden when Ahaz burnt the other copies of the Law. It may be, however, that it had lain hid in the Ark itself, which Manasseh had thrown aside into some of the many cells, or chambers, round the temple, where it might easily have remained, unnoticed, till the searching eagerness of the commission discovered it.[4]

Hitherto the king had acted only from the traditional knowledge of the old religion, preserved by the godly through the dark times of Manasseh and Amon; but the written Law was now in his hands. That its earlier existence was well known, is shown by its instant recog-

[1] (Heb.) 2 Chron. xxxiv. 14. In 2 Kings (xxii. 8) it is called "the Book of the Torah, or Law."

[2] The money was taken from the chest, and duly weighed, then put into bags, which were forthwith sealed. 2 Kings xii. 10; xxiv. 4. *Sept.*

[3] Jos., *Ant.*, X. iv. 2.

[4] This is the idea of Thenius (*Comm.*, on 2 Kings, p. 435). The opinion of so calm and impartial a scholar must, in any case, command respect.

nition as "The Book of the Law." Nor is it possible that Josiah himself, and those round him, should have received it as the ancient sacred Book of the nation, had no such Book formerly existed.

Not a moment was lost in communicating the great event to the king. Handing the manuscript to Shaphan, the royal scribe or secretary, as the proper person to bring it before Josiah, Hilkiah awaited the result. Skilled in reading such manuscripts, as became his office, the secretary, after examining it himself, at once sought an opportunity to read "out of it"[1] to his master. The effect on the king was like that produced on Luther by his finding an old Latin Bible in the library of the Augustine convent at Erfurt. The Reformer had never seen the Scriptures, though he was not only a Christian, but a monk.[2] There had been religion enough, of a kind, round him all his life; religion professing to be based on the written word; but the difference between the conventional and the true flashed on his soul with lightning brightness, when the Sacred Book itself was consulted. It taught him another lesson than that of fasts and vigils, and led him to trust to the infinite grace of God rather than to singing masses. Intensely in earnest, like the German monk, Josiah was overwhelmed on hearing, for the first time, the very words of the Divine Law. Much had been handed down by the godly through the dark times of his father and grandfather, but much had been neglected. Rending his clothes, in token of profound grief, at the thought that all the calamities of his people had come on them, because their "fathers had not kept the word of Jehovah, to do after all that was written

[1] So in the Heb. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 18. In 2 Kings xxii. 8, 10, it is said "he read it."

[2] Carlyle's *Hero Worship*, p. 120.

in this book," he sent to the prophetess Huldah, the recognised head of the order of prophets in Jerusalem—for Jeremiah still lived at Anathoth, though often in the city—to inquire respecting this great discovery. Would the nation really have to suffer all the curses pronounced on apostasy from Jehovah, in the newly-found Book, or was there still hope? The answer was in keeping with the words of the prophets as a whole. Judah had fallen by its determined idolatry, and the Divine wrath would certainly be poured out on it. But Josiah had listened to the preaching of Jeremiah and his brethren, and had humbled himself before God, and rent his clothes and wept. He therefore would be gathered to his fathers before the final catastrophe of his people. So far as that was concerned, he should die in peace.[1]

The teaching of the prophets, the example of earlier kings, and the words of the Law itself, indicated the next step to be taken. The prophets, in all their utterances, had addressed their fellow-countrymen as standing in special relations to Jehovah, as His chosen people; the vineyard He had planted; the bride He had espoused. David, Solomon, Jehoshaphat, and Hezekiah, as the heads of the state, had publicly conducted solemn acts of national consecration to Him. The words of the newly-discovered Law, moreover, carried back the history of the race to the covenant of Jehovah with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to that made under the shadow of Sinai, with the tribes sprung from these patriarchs. It was hence natural, that Josiah should seek formally to renew for himself and his people, so august a relation with the God of their fathers. Summoning the elders of Judah and Jerusalem, therefore, as representatives of the whole community, and all the population, as spectators

[1] 2 Kings xxii. 8–20. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 14–28.

of the solemn act done in their name, he held a great assembly at the temple in Jerusalem, to bring the newly-found Law before them. On the day appointed, the wide space of the temple enclosure was crowded with a vast multitude, headed by the prophets, priests, Levites, and great men of the tribes. A platform had been raised for the young king, in the court of the temple; the elders of the people standing around. Opening the precious roll, he himself, to deepen the impression, read it aloud to them throughout, with all its details of the ancient covenant made with the nation by Jehovah; the promises if it were kept, and the curses if it were broken. Then followed a striking scene. Lifting his voice, Josiah solemnly declared his resolution to live in obedience to all the requirements of the Divine word. "Standing on his platform," says the Book of Kings,[1] "he made *the* covenant before Jehovah, to walk after Jehovah, and to keep His commandments, and His testimonies, and His statutes, with all his heart; and with all his soul to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book."[2] Kindled to enthusiasm by his example, the elders, in the name of the people, hastened to give their eager concurrence in the act of the king;[3] the whole body of the people, apparently, adopting their act, by a loud Amen. Judah was once more, at least in outward form, the covenant people of God.[4]

What portion of the Bible was thus brought to light after long oblivion, has been the subject of warm con-

[1] 2 Kings xxiii. 3. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 31.

[2] See Deut. xxvi. 16.

[3] Graetz thinks that an ox was slain, and that the king and all the people passed between the parts of it. *Gesch.*, vol. ii. p. 318.

[4] 2 Kings xxiii. 1–3. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 29–32. Deut. xxvii. 15. 1 Chron. xvi. 36.

troversy. Many scholars believe it was the Book known as Deuteronomy;[1] others, that while including that section of the Torah, it also embraced a greater or less portion of the other divisions of the Pentateuch,[2] while Thenius supposes it to have been a great collection of Mosaic commands and laws, from which our Pentateuch was afterwards arranged and compiled.[3] As, however, it is certain that a Book of the Law, containing more or less of the present Pentateuch, was in circulation long before Josiah,[4] it seems most reasonable to believe that Hilkiah recovered not only Deuteronomy, but the various sacred writings even then comprised in the Torah, or Law, as a whole. That portion read by Shaphan and Josiah may, indeed, have been only our present Deuteronomy, before its final revision; nor is it strange that it should be spoken of as in itself the Book of the Law, since it presents, in a style, the glowing warmth and poetry of which are specially attractive and impressive, the last utterances of the Founder of the Israelite nation, summing up and enforcing his whole previous legislation. Deuteronomy, moreover, was "the Book of the Law" required to be written out by each king on his accession,[5] and only this portion, as embodying the spirit of the whole, was read before the people, every seven years,[6]

[1] So Gesenius, De Wette, Graetz, Reuss, Schrader, Bleek, Berthean, Ewald, Dillmann and others.

[2] Hengstenberg, Kennicott, Keil, Dean Perowne, Schultz, Lord Arthur Hervey, von Lengerke.

[3] Thenius, *B. d. Könige*, p. 434.

[4] Ewald, *Geschichte*, vol. iii. p. 759.

[5] Deut. xvii. 18. The words mean, lit., "a *repetition* of this law," which is only another name for Deuteronomy. Hence the Sept. renders the words "of this Deuteronomy."

[6] It was received as an unquestionable tradition in the time of the second temple, that this had always been the practice. The

at the Feast of Tabernacles.[1] The "Book of the Law" was therefore, clearly, a general expression, sometimes embracing all the sections of the Torah, but, at others, confined to Deuteronomy—the last. Nor is it to be overlooked that Deuteronomy alone presents "the Law" in a form brief enough to be read through in public, at one time, or that the words in which Josiah and the people renewed their covenant with Jehovah—pledging themselves to keep His commandments, His testimonies and statutes, with all their heart and with all their soul, are peculiar to that Book.[2] But this in no way precludes the existence, along with it, of the other portions of the Law. Even the most advanced critics admit that parts at least of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, already existed, and these could hardly have been left to perish by the faithful hands which had preserved the copy of Deuteronomy.[3]

The age of the book thus found has given rise to vigorous controversy. Was it a portion of the Law handed down from the time of Moses, or, if not, what was its age? At the end of Deuteronomy it is expressly said[4] that Moses wrote "the words of this law in a book until they were finished," and its existence in a written form is again and again mentioned in other

words are, "from the beginning of Deuteronomy." Dean Perowne, *Dict. of Bible*, vol. ii. p. 773. Delitzsch, *On Genesis*, p. 63.

[1] Deut. xxxi. 9–12.

[2] Deut. iv. 29; vi. 5; x. 12; xi. 13; xiii. 3; xxvi. 19; xxx. 2.

[3] While I speak of parts of the other books of the Pentateuch as, admittedly, in written existence before Josiah's day, I cannot but believe that their material, as a whole, had been for ages in the hands of the priests, though they may have been arranged in their present form, with necessary elucidations, and, perhaps, amplifications, by inspired men of various times.

[4] Deut. xxxi. 24.

passages.[1] The future king, as we have seen, was to transcribe it. Joshua is commanded to write "all the words of it" on great stones smoothed with plaster, as was the custom in Egypt, and to set them up on Mount Ebal, after he had crossed the Jordan.[2] Finally, the complete copy is said to have been handed over to the priests by Moses, after he had himself written it out; to be put "in the side of the Ark of the Covenant," for permanent preservation.

Nothing, it might seem, could be clearer than this. Yet the most extraordinary theories have been advanced in support of the view that Deuteronomy was a production of the reign of Hezekiah, or even a conscious fraud of well meaning persons in the time of Josiah himself. Von Bohlen maintains that it was composed by the high priest Hilkiah, the prophet Jeremiah, the prophetess Huldah, the scribe Shaphan, and his son Ahikam.[3] Ewald fancied it was written in Egypt by a prophet who had fled thither, during the persecution of Manasseh; for the benefit, primarily, of Jews sold by that king as slaves to Pharaoh. Thence, it was accidentally brought to Palestine, and at last found its way to the place in which Hilkiah discovered it.[4] Gesenius ascribed it to Jeremiah.[5] The De Wette-Schrader "Introduction" assumes that it was written by some one closely connected with that prophet.[6] Robertson Smith, following Wellhausen, Dill-

[1] Deut. xvii. 18 ff.; xxvii. 2, 3, 8; xxviii. 58, 61; xxix. 19 ff.; xxx. 10; xxxi. 9.

[2] A summary of the Law must have been intended in this case, or perhaps simply its bare enactments, in brief, without the interspersed comments. In our own day, the essence of an Act of Parliament is constantly published in a condensed form.

[3] Von Bohlen, *Die Genesis historisch-kritisch erläutert*, p. 164.

[4] Ewald, *Geschichte*, vol. iii. p. 735. [5] *Gesch. d. Hebr. Spr.*, p. 32.

[6] De Wette-Schrader, *Einleitung*, p. 323.

mann,[1] Riehm and others, sets it down as the creation of prophets, not priests, in the seventh century [2] before Christ. Riehm, like Ewald, ascribes it to the reign of Manasseh. Knobel and von Lengerke, like Graf, and some others, think it was written under Josiah. Vaihinger takes for granted it was composed under Hezekiah.[3]

That so many should have assumed its late origin seems to result from the fact that new theories rise, prevail, and pass away, in biblical criticism, as in all other branches of study. A few years ago Sir Charles Lyell was the supreme authority in geological science; now, his principle of the uniform action of existing causes in all ages of the past, is discredited by a rising school of great eminence. Not long since invalids were sent by the faculty to the warmth of Madeira; now, the same class of patients are recommended to seek the arctic cold of an alpine winter. In both cases, science gave apparently ample grounds for its counsels. The fact is, a theory started by some vigorous thinker, and supported by him with an imposing array of sound or unsound evidence, is certain to gain the support of the mass of average minds, till some other original brain starts another, and then the first is quietly dropped. It has been thus, repeatedly, in biblical criticism, and it is so at present.

The new school, however, is far from embracing the whole scholarship of the day. Lord Arthur Hervey holds that Deuteronomy was read by Joshua at Mount Gerizim. Kleinert thinks it was composed in the time of the

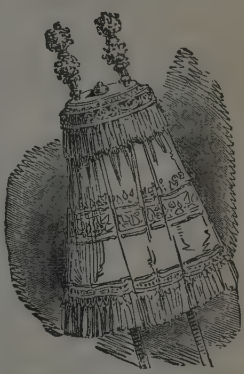
[1] *Bibel Lex.*, vol. ii. p. 444.

[2] *Bible in Jewish Church*, p. 362.

[3] Herzog, *Real Encyk.*, vol. ii. pp. 329 ff. *Studien und Kritiken*, 1873, pp. 165 ff.

Judges. Keil believes it was written, at least to the thirty-first chapter, by Moses,[1] and Delitzsch agrees with him.[2] Dean Perowne has no doubt of this.[3] Most of these critics, indeed, admit evidence of revision and final completion; they speak only of the substance of the book.

It is certain, as already said, that sacred books were in existence among the Hebrews long before Josiah. In Exodus we read[4] of "the Book of the Covenant," which contained the "words and the judgments" of God, so far as they had till then been given. The defeat of Amalek was written in "*the* book";[5] apparently one already known; and in Numbers we learn that Moses wrote the journeyings of the children of Israel, and their various stations.[6] The language of Deuteronomy has already been quoted. Joshua repeatedly mentions "the Book of the Law of God," and names Moses as having written it.[7] David speaks of a written law of Moses.[8] At the coronation of King Joash, the testimony was put in his hands, or laid on his head, as required by Deuteronomy.[9] In Chronicles[10] David is said to have



COVERING OF A ROLL OF THE LAW.

The roll is wound round the two rods, which appear below. The covering is put over it for its preservation.

[1] *Einleitung*, pp. 93 ff.
[2] Luthardt's *Zeitschrift*, 1880, pp. 503–509.
[3] *Dict. of Bible*, art. *Pentateuch and Deut.*
[4] Exod. xxiv. 7. [5] Exod. xvii. 14. [6] Num. xxxiii. 2.
[7] Josh. i. 7, 8; viii. 31, 34; xxiii. 6; xxiv. 26. [8] 1 Kings ii. 3.
[9] 2 Kings xi. 12. 2 Chron. xxiii. 11. [10] 1 Chron. xvi. 40.

directed his preparations for public worship "according to the law of Jehovah;" and in his charge to Solomon he speaks of the "law of Jehovah thy God, the statutes, and the judgments which Jehovah charged Moses with, concerning Israel."[1] Rehoboam is said to have "forsaken the law of Jehovah."[2] Asa commanded Judah to obey the "Law and the Commandment."[3] Azariah the prophet reminds that king, that Israel had long been "without the true God, and without a *teaching priest* and without *law*."[4] Jehoshaphat appointed princes, priests and Levites to instruct the people, and, it is added, "they *taught* in Judah and had the Book of the Law of Jehovah with them."[5] Amaziah, we are told, spared the children of his father's murderers in obedience to the directions of "the law of the book of Moses."[6] Hezekiah's regulations in connection with the restoration of the national worship, are said to have been carried out "as it is written in the law of Jehovah;"[7] and Jehovah is introduced by the author of Chronicles as speaking to David of "the whole Law, and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses."[8]

But not only are written documents thus constantly mentioned; quotations or references to the books of the Pentateuch are numerous through the prophets. Amos shows his intimate acquaintance with Deuteronomy.[9] Hosea not only proves in many passages that he knew it well,[10] but speaks of the whole law[11] in these remark-

[1] 1 Chron. xvii. 12, 13. [2] 2 Chron. xii. [3] 2 Chron. xiv. 4.
[4] 2 Chron. xvii. 9. [5] 2 Chron. xv. 3.
[6] 2 Chron. xxv. 4. 2 Kings xiv. 6. Deut. xxiv. 16.
[7] 2 Chron. xxxi. 3, 4, 21. [8] 2 Chron. xxxiii. 8.
[9] See Amos i. 11, 14; ii. 9, 11; iii. 2; iv. 4, 5, 9; x. 13; v. 11, 25; vii. 3, 8, 14; ix. 4, 7; in reference Bibles. See also iv. 11. Comp. with Deut. xxix. 23. [10] Hos. viii 12.
[11] See in a reference Bible, Hos. i. 2; iii. 3; iv. 4; v. 10; vi. 1;

able words: "I (Jehovah) have written to him (Israel) the ten thousand things of my Law." A few of the many allusions to Deuteronomy in Isaiah are given in the fourth volume of these Hours,[1] and a reference Bible will show the same feature in Micah. Thus, not only Jeremiah and the later prophets, but the whole brotherhood, from its earliest member, silently witness, not merely to the existence of Deuteronomy as a recognised part of the Law, but to that of the fuller revelations of the Pentateuch.

Among the various tests of the antiquity of any document, no one is more reliable than the peculiarities of the words it employs. It would, for example, be impossible that any writing in which the pronoun "its" occurred could be older than about A.D. 1600, because "its" was not in use before that date. It does not once occur in our Authorized Version.[2] The use of old English forms, such as "maken," and "slepen," for "to make," and "to sleep,"[3] marks a composition as of a certain date in the history of our language. But Deuteronomy is characterised, to a striking degree, by verbal forms which had grown obsolete long before the time of Josiah. The masculine form of the pronoun, *hōō*, for the feminine, *hēē*, occurs, in all, 195 times in the Pentateuch, and of these, 36 instances are in Deuteronomy—a usage like

vii. 12; viii. 12; ix. 4, 12; x. 4, 8, 10; xi. 3, 8; xiii. 5, 10, 12; xiv. 3. Compare also Hos. iv. 13, with Deut. xii. 2; Hos. viii. 13, with Deut. xxviii. 68; Hos. xi. 3, with Deut. i. 31; Hos. xiii. 6, with Deut. viii. 11–14.

[1] Vol. iv. pp. 284–5.

[2] Trench's *English, Past and Present*, p. 89. Marsh's *English Language*, p. 122.

[3] Thus—

"And smalĕ fowlĕs maken melodie,
That slepen al the night with open yhe."—*Chaucer.*

that of old English as seen in our Bibles.[1] Indeed, the feminine, *hēē*, is not found at all in Deuteronomy, though it is met with 11 times in the other books of the Pentateuch. "*Naar*," a youth, is of common gender in the Pentateuch, standing for a maiden as well as a boy; and, in accordance with this primitive usage, the feminine, "*Naarah*," occurs only once in Deuteronomy. König, in his unanswerable analysis of the Book,[2] gives long lists of instances in which ancient forms of words are used, and shows that others are frequent in it which were obsolete at a later period.[3] One striking fact is specially curious. The termination *ūn*, in the future, is unknown in the prose writings of the period after the return from Babylon. It never occurs in Esther, Ezra, or Nehemiah, the 1st Book of Chronicles, the Hebrew of Daniel, Haggai, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Canticles, Jonah, or Obadiah. It is met with only 5 times in Jeremiah, and 3 times in Ezekiel. But in the Pentateuch it is found 105 times, and of these 58 are in Deuteronomy.[4] The curious fact that in some instances Aramaic forms, which are habitual in the oldest books of Scripture, occur also in the latest, is susceptible of a natural and easy explanation. Abraham, at his arrival in Canaan, spoke Aramaic, and, though he adopted the closely allied language of the Canaanites, some of the forms of his own mother-tongue were still retained; as forms of old English still survive in our local dialects.[5]

[1] Thus Exod. xxxvii. 17. "Of beaten work made he the candlestick; *his* shaft, and *his* branch, *his* bowls, *his* knops, and *his* flowers, were of the same.

[2] König's *Alt. Test. Studien*, Heft. ii. Berlin, 1839.

[3] Some of these will be found in Dean Perowne's *Art. on the Pentateuch. Dict. of the Bible*, vol. ii. p. 782.

[4] *König*, pp. 165–6.

[5] Lancashire, "singen" for sing. So, generally, in Provincial

Gradually, however, these traces of their Mesopotamian origin died out from the language of the Hebrews. But the captivity carried them back again to Aramaic-speaking lands, and there they learned, once more, to use the tongue laid aside by their forefathers, more than 1500 years before.[1] Intercourse with Damascus, Assyria, and Babylon, from the time of David to the fall of the State must also have tended to reintroduce Aramaic peculiarities.[2]

Nor can objection be raised to the remote antiquity of any portion of the Pentateuch from its voluminousness as a whole. The long annals of Egyptian and Assyrian kings, and the abundant literary remains of various kinds, recovered from the mounds of the Tigris and Euphrates, and from the tombs of Egypt, prove that written documents were common in remote ages. In the Louvre Museum there is, indeed, an exquisite statue of an Egyptian scribe busy with his pen, dating from a period long anterior to Abraham.

Other grounds on which a late date is assigned to Deuteronomy and the various books of the Pentateuch can hardly be regarded as very weighty.[4]

Thus it is made a difficulty, for example, that in the last chapter of Deuteronomy,[5] which no one supposes of the same age as the earlier part of the book, the town

English, "afeard" for "afraid," "ris" for "rose," "axe" for "ask;" all, simply old English forms.

[1] *König*, Heft. ii. *passim*.

[2] On the whole subject of Deuteronomy, the introduction to Schultz, *Das Deuteronomium erklärt*, Berlin, 1859, is very copious.

[3] See vol. i. p. 245.

[4] I confine myself mainly to those which are advanced in the *Bible in the Jewish Church*, the latest expression of the ultra-rationalistic school.

[5] Deut. xxxiv. 1.

of Dan is thus named, though it was known as Laish till the days of the Judges.[1] That such additions have been made here and there to the historical notices of the earlier books, by revisers of different periods, is assumed to prove that the historical portions of the first Books of the Bible were written in the land of Canaan, and that, not before the period of the kings![2] The words "on this side Jordan," in Deut. i. 1, it is said, ought to be translated "across the Jordan," in which case they would show that the writer lived in West Palestine. Etymologically, "*aiber*," the word used, means "*across*," but unfortunately for the new critics, it was employed arbitrarily, for both east and west, when Deuteronomy was written, without reference to the relative position of the Jordan, or other natural boundary; leaving its meaning to be gathered from an additional word of explanation. Thus, in Num. xxxii. 19, we read, "For we will not inherit with them on yonder side (mai-aibĕr) the Jordan, and forward," or "thence, on"; "because our inheritance is fallen to us on this side (mai-aibĕr) Jordan, eastward;" so that in this verse *aiber* stands for both east and west of the Jordan. The word, ultimately, after the conquest of Canaan, was applied to the east side of Jordan; as Perea, which means the same, was at a still later period; but, when the Pentateuch was written, it was used indifferently of the east and west, in reference to the temporary position of the Hebrews, who were still on the eastern side. Its meaning in the first verse of Deuteronomy is, moreover, at once conclusively proved from the fact that the various places mentioned as marking the region intended, are all on the east of the Jordan.

[1] Judges xviii. 27, 29.

[2] *Smith*, p. 322. The instance quoted is the list of Edomite kings "before there reigned a king of the children of Israel"—an

We are further told that the Pentateuch could not have been written by Moses, from the use of the word *yamah*—"towards the sea"—for Westward; and of "Negeb," the name employed for the southern uplands of Judah, for the South. "At mount Sinai, it is said, the sea did not lie to the West, and the Negeb was to the North." "If the writer lived in Palestine, however, the expressions would be correct."[1] But it is forgotten that the Hebrews had spoken the language of Palestine for centuries before the birth of Moses, and must have adopted and used its ordinary geographical expressions, in the popular and not the etymological sense. Our word "South" means "towards the sun," but surely an Australian is not wrong in calling Melbourne south of Sydney, though, to him, it is not really south, that is, towards the sun, but north. Does he say that he goes *south* to India, because that country is etymologically south from Australia?

An objection is also raised on the ground that the patriarchal sites mentioned in the Pentateuch can still be identified, while we cannot put our finger so readily on those mentioned in connection with the wilderness wanderings. As if it could be as easy to follow the halting places over a pathless wilderness, as the sojourn of an encampment near the still existing towns and villages of a settled country!

A great deal has been made of the use of the two names, Elohim and Jehovah, for God, in various passages and parts of the early books of Scripture. But while it is readily admitted that writings still older than those of Moses may have been incorporated by him in his own narratives, or added, in some cases, by inspired men of

expression which must have been added by a reviser of Saul or David's time, at the earliest.

[1] *Smith*, p. 323.

after times; the extent to which the theory of "independent sources" is pressed, in connection with the use of these two sacred words, is arbitrary and fanciful in the extreme. Ewald, in the face of his own passion for subdividing, has shown that the employment of different names of God is to be explained from their different significations, and the other grounds advanced for dissecting each Book—the superscriptions, repetitions, and variations in accounts of the same event, as well as their abrupt introduction—are, according to him, peculiarities of Semitic historical composition, but no proof of variety of sources or compilers, in the separate sections of a narrative.[1] Since his day however, critics have gone to greater lengths. Among them the Pentateuch is torn into countless shreds; even single verses in many cases being cut in two, as the composition of different authors. The theory of various documents has, indeed, taken every shape, as the cloud of Polonius seemed by turns a weasel, a camel, and a whale. Two documents, or authors, by no means suffice. Every critic has his own fancy, and assigns the sacred text to what number of authors, editors, and compositions he thinks fit, each with an arbitrary name and age. Dillmann supposes a first Book of Laws, a second, and then a third, followed by the Deuteronomist.[2] Ewald recognises nine documents, by nine different authors. Hupfeld sees the work of four authors in Genesis alone. Bleek acknowledges only a "Jehovist," who filled out an original "Elohist" document embracing the whole Pentateuch, except Deuteronomy; which itself is a production of the interval between Hezekiah and Josiah. Knobel detects six documents,

[1] *Die Composition d. Genesis kritisch untersucht.* Braunschweig, 1823.

[2] *Bib. Lex.*, vol. ii. p. 444.

by six compilers, in the Five Books. These critics, and many others, range, fancy free, over centuries, in their estimate of the age of their material, and cut it, each, to his own pattern. But a new school has risen. The theory of Graf, that Deuteronomy was older than Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, had the charm of novelty, and has attracted Kuenen, Wellhausen, Colenso, Robertson Smith, and others. In fact, it is the fashionable hypothesis of the day, and we now hear of Levitical, that is, priestly laws, and of the Deuteronomic code, breathing the spirit of the Prophets more than of Jehovist or Elohist documents. But the brand new hypothesis of "Levitical and non-Levitical, or Deuteronomic portions" has only introduced fresh complications in the dissection of the different Books of the Pentateuch, with the same delightful independence on the part of each critic, in cutting the sacred text to shreds.

One illustration may suffice. A recent "Introduction," [1] of high standing, recognises three authors only in the Pentateuch—an annalist; a writer who favoured theocratic or priestly views; and a third, pervaded by the spirit of the Prophets, though he has made free use of ancient documents. Among these compilers the Book of Genesis is distributed, a passage here, and another there, in a table extending over a large page and a half, in three parallel columns, single verses being cut in two in fifteen cases, as written by different hands. The mutilated fragments of Exodus cover a similar page; nine verses being bisected. Leviticus is assigned almost as a whole to the "Elohim" documents. Numbers has three-quarters of a page devoted to a hypothetical table of the contributions of the three compilers, the two halves of six different verses being referred to two independent

[1] *De Wette-Schrader's*, pp. 274, 276, 280, 281, 289, 294.

authors. In Deuteronomy "the Annalist" is credited with four and a half verses in one chapter,[1] and six in another, including two separate halves;[2] the "Theocratic compiler" is detected as the author of two verses in one chapter and three in another;[3] while the "Prophetic contributor" is assumed to have added one chapter and part of three others; all the rest falling to the share of the "Deuteronomist." Confusion this, rather than simplification; darkness rather than light! No wonder Graetz, himself a wild theorist, ingenuously admits that no two critics agree either in the division of their material, or in the age they assign to the compositions they thus arbitrarily define.[4] Let the unsophisticated reader glance at the different Books of the Pentateuch, and notice how closely the Divine names "Lord," and "God," answering to Jehovah and Elohim, are associated, in countless instances; often, indeed, in the same verse; and he will be able to judge how hopeless it is to build any general theory of authorship on their use. Nor is the attempt less arbitrary to apportion the sacred text to distinct authors and ages, from a fancied detection of a different style in the various sections.

The claim expressly made in Deuteronomy of its being written by Moses,[5] is strengthened, if we may so speak, by the whole tone and contents of the Book. The magnificent addresses of the Prophet, and the laws he enforces, correspond, throughout, to the situation described in the opening verses, which represent Israel as encamped, at the end of their wilderness life, on the steppes of Moab, ready to cross the Jordan. He speaks not only with the vividness of an eye-witness, but with the enthusiasm and tenderness of a Leader, who could look back to the time

[1] Deut. xxxii. [2] Deut. xxxiv. [3] Deut. iv. 10.
[4] *Geschichte*, vol. ii. Note p. 455. [5] Deut. xxxi. 24.

when his people were in the "slave house" of Egypt. Allusions to Egyptian customs and usages, natural in the mouth of one familiar with that country, are constant. We have references to Egyptian regulations in time of war;[1] to the Egyptian bastinado,[2] and to the Egyptian mode of irrigation.[3] Among the curses threatened are "the sicknesses of Egypt."[4] To be sold again to that country is the ideal of direst calamity.[5] As in Leviticus,[6] the remembrance that they were once slaves in Egypt is urged, repeatedly, to lead them to obey the laws,[7] and references to the abode of Israel there are frequent[8] even in the laws themselves, and, above all, in that respecting the king; a peculiarity very hard to explain if the Book was written in the reign of Josiah or Manasseh.

Nor is it easy to imagine, why a writer in the time of these kings, should have represented Moses as giving directions respecting their putting down nations which had then, for centuries, ceased to be objects of public concern. The Amalekites and Canaanites are to be rooted out; but the former had virtually been so since the time of David, four hundred years back, and the remnant of the Canaanites in the bounds of Judah had, for ages, been humble slaves and dependants. The prohibition of the worship of the host of heaven[9] has been hastily fancied to refer to the idolatry introduced by Ahaz and Manasseh from Assyria, but may as justly be held to forbid the ancient Arab idolatry of the same kind.[10] A pure spiritual

[1] Deut. xx. 5. [2] Deut. xxv. 2. [3] Deut. xi. 10.
[4] Deut. vii. 15; xxviii. 60. [5] Deut. xxviii. 68.
[6] Lev. xix. 34; xvii.;—xx.; and throughout very like Deut.
[7] Deut. v. 15; xxiv. 18, 22.
[8] Deut. vi. 21–23; vii. 8, 18; xi. 3; xvii. 16.
[9] Deut. iv. 19; xvii. 3.
[10] See *De Wette-Schrader*, § 206, e.g., on the one side, and Klei-

religion such as Deuteronomy presents, allowing no similitude of Jehovah of any kind, checks every approach to idolatry, while the demand that worship and obedience should rest on the affections, guards against formalism. All the laws given anticipate the possession of Western Palestine, and are fitted for the altered state of things this would introduce. In no case is the passage across Jordan an accomplished event; it is always, at most, in the near future. That modifications of the statutes given at Sinai occur in some instances, is only what was inevitable, in view of the transition of the community from tent life, to that of a settled population. Even these variations, however, are based on the Sinaitic legislation. In the earlier Books, Moses, as the great prophet, had spoken in the name of Jehovah; in Deuteronomy he reminds his nation, now that he is about to leave them for ever, that he was the intermediary through whom these Divine communications had been given. Much stress has been laid on the emphasis with which Deuteronomy urges the recognition of a central sanctuary by the tribes. The use of high places by the patriarchs and prophets, to a late period, is thought to imply that this marks the date of the Book as not earlier than Manasseh or Josiah. It is suggested, indeed, that the idea of a single temple was an invention of the priests at Jerusalem, to secure a monopoly of their office.[1] But the Tabernacle had already, from the first, embodied the same principle.[2]

nert, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 105 ff.; Keil, *Die B. der Könige*, p. 388; Delitzsch, *Zu Hiob*, p. 387, on the other.

[1] So Reuss and others.

[2] Wellhausen boldly meets this, by declaring that there never was a Tabernacle; that the account of it was only an invention of the priests after the exile—that is, 1,000 years after Moses, I am afraid that those other critics also hold this view, who think the Middle Books of the Pentateuch in which the Tabernacle is

Deuteronomy only assumes that it will continue to be recognised in the future as in the past, naming no favoured spot; leaving that to the circumstances of after ages. Nor does it even preclude a change from one locality to another, as occasion may demand.[1] Hence, Shiloh was the first great religious centre; Jerusalem only rising to take its place under David and Solomon. Nor is it strange that in the dissolution of society after the death of Joshua, when national unity perished for centuries, local sanctuaries should have everywhere sprung up, in accordance with ancient custom; or that when the tribes had been raised once more to a nation, under the kings, the prejudices of generations made it impossible, till the days of Josiah, to carry out, to its fullest extent, the law appointing only one central sanctuary. Even so late as the reign of Hezekiah, as we know, his attempt to centralize worship was urged on the populace by the Assyrian officials of Sennacherib, in the expectation than it would rouse them to revolt.[2]

described, were composed, almost entirely, after the return from Babylon. It would seem that the destructive school will believe anything, if it promise to lay the Bible in ruins.

[1] Deut. xii. 14–26; xiv. 25, ff; xvi. 2, 6, 11, etc.

[2] See vol. iv. p. 447. Stress is laid by Vaihinger (*Herzog*, vol. ii. p. 325) on the use of the words "house of Jehovah," Deut. xxiii. 18, as proving the late origin of Deuteronomy. But it occurs in the original legislation, which all grant to be Mosaic (Exod. xxiii. 19), and it is also used of the Tabernacle at Shiloh. 1 Sam. i. 7–24; iii. 15.

It is maintained by those who in this, also, have adopted the extreme views of the Wellhausen school, that the distinction between priests and Levites is not recognised in Deuteronomy, and was only introduced, after the Exile, by the priestly invention of the Middle Books of the Pentateuch. But in Deut. xviii. 1, we read of "the priests, the Levites, the whole tribe of Levi," that is—not only the priests, but also the Levites, who, between them,

The brief cautions,[1] that if kings were introduced, they should avoid relying on horses and chariots, and should neither indulge in polygamy nor strive to amass vast

made up the whole tribe of Levi. Both priests and Levites belonged to the one tribe, and thus both could justly be called Levites. But in Deut. xviii. 3, we read of the priest; in verse 6 of the Levite. When in Deut. xvii. 9–18, we read of "the priests, the Levites," or, in Deut. xxi. 5; xxxi. 9, of "the priests, the sons of Levi"—there is no identification of priest with Levites, but only a recognition of the fact that the priests were descendants of the patriarch Levi—as of course the Levites were also.* Priests and Levites are, in fact, considered in Deuteronomy as essentially one great whole, and priests are spoken of as Levites or sons of Levi, to bring into prominence their belonging to the sacred tribe, and thus show their priesthood to be rightful and authoritative.† The assertion that Deuteronomy speaks of a homeless and wretched priest caste, and of the Levites as no longer settled in the towns assigned them in Numbers xxxv. but as scattered sojourners and strangers in the towns at large, is based on various errors. The Levites were necessarily "within the gates" of the general community, from the fact that the towns granted them had a general lay population as well. The Levites were not by any means their only inhabitants.‡ Moreover, it could readily be foreseen that the possession of the 48 Levitical towns would be a work of time; it was never, in fact, wholly accomplished, and hence many Levites had to seek their home where they could. As to the modifications in Deuteronomy, of the law for the support of the Levites, they are at once explained as provisions against the foreseen neglect of former laws for their maintenance. To build up a theory that Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, were forgeries of the time after the Exile, as correctives of Deuteronomy, from the distinction made in them between priest and Levite, in supposed contrast to the Fifth Book, or from fancied alterations in the law for their support, is at best an extraordinary illustration of perverted ingenuity.

[1] Deut. xvii. 14.

* See 2 Chron. xxiii. 18; xxxv. 27; xxx. 17. Jer. xxxi i. 18–21.

† Oehler, in *Herzog*, vol. viii. p. 350.

‡ Ewald's *Geschichte*, vol. ii. p. 403.

treasures,[1] like the despots around, speak of wise foresight, which provides for every contingency. Strange to say, even in this section, so foreign to the ancient polity of the nation, the reason assigned for not "multiplying horses" is such as would be natural to a lawgiver who had been in Egypt, and knew what his people had suffered there. They are not to do it because it would "cause the people to return to Egypt," the great breeding place of horses for Palestine.[2] They had endured enough at its hands in the past, and its moral corruptions were too dangerous for the chosen people of God. It was statesmanlike to look forward to the introduction of kings as possible; but what fitness could there have been in such counsels, if given for the first time in the reign of Josiah, more than four hundred years after monarchy had been established?

The spirit of Deuteronomy breathes out in the intimation that Jehovah would raise up to the nation an order of prophets,[3] as His divinely-commissioned spokesmen; the counterparts, in fact, in this respect, of Moses himself. It is in keeping with the spirit of the relations of Jehovah to them from the time of their leaving Egypt. Eldad and Medad, and the seventy elders, had prophesied at Sinai, and Moses had shown his noble breadth of soul in the wish that not only they, but all the people of

[1] The emperor of Morocco is reported to have a subterranean treasury full of untold wealth in coin, jewels, and precious stones. It is, they say, guarded by soldiers, who never come up to day again, after being set over it.

Speaking of the treasury of Surajah Dowlah, Clive said: "I walked through vaults thrown open to me alone, and piled on both sides with gold and jewels." Gleig's *Life of Clive*, p. 297.

[2] 1 Kings x. 26. [3] Deut. xiii. 2–6; xviii. 15 ff. where, "an order of prophets," may be read instead of "a prophet." This latter sense, however, is included—see Acts iii. 22.

Jehovah were prophets.[1] It was, therefore, natural that he should anticipate the rise of men in after times, moved by the same Divine impulse; for if the ritual service was left to the priest, the moral training of the nation was the task of the prophetical order.

The Book of Leviticus had commanded[2] that the Hebrew should love his fellow-Hebrew as himself;[3] but it was reserved to Deuteronomy to lift the thoughts of the nation to a still nobler ideal. It, first, expressly commends the Eternal to human love, and thus formally exalts religion into the homage of the soul to God. It discloses Jehovah as condescending to reveal His love to His people, and demanding their love in return.[4] He proclaims Himself as the faithful God, who keeps covenant with them that love Him. Mere outward service is treated as only the husk and shell of religion, good for subordinate ends; the fervour of the heart as its essence. Such a principle, at such an age, is a unique phenomenon in the history of the world; for everywhere else, till Christianity appeared, religion and morality were distinct ideas. To perform prescribed rites constituted a man religious, apart from the practice of virtue. But in Deuteronomy the germs of the highest conception possible to humanity were embodied,—germs which slowly spread their influence, age after age, and rightly claim as their fruit, all that was good and holy in the prophets and righteous men of the ancient people of God.

As became a religion thus based on love towards Jehovah, a spirit of tenderness largely pervades the Fifth

[1] Num. xi. 26, 27, 29.

[2] Lev. xix. 18.

[3] This is what is meant by "neighbour" in its old restriction, as shown in the earlier clause of the verse.

[4] Deut vi. 5; x. 12; xi. 1; xiii. 22; xix. 9; xxx. 6; vii. 9, 13; x. 15; xiii. 3; xxx. 16, 20; iv. 37; vii. 7, 8; x. 18.

Book. In the earlier Law, Moses had said, "Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child,"[1] and had cared for the foreigner that "he should not be vexed."[2] He had denounced usury; had required that raiment taken in pledge be returned before night;[3] and in many other details had vindicated the Divine pity and compassion. In Deuteronomy widows and orphans are protected with equal care,[4] and so is the foreigner.[5] The poor come under its guardian shadow.[6] Usury, and goods given in pledge are the subject of special laws.[7] As in Exodus, even a beast is commended to the kindness of all.[8] The lot of the slave is ameliorated.[9] Woman is protected by different enactments.[10] The power of fathers over their children is restrained within gentler bounds than before.[11] The property of foreigners is secured, and provision made for the preservation to families of their inheritance.[12]

That a book breathing a spirit of such lofty morality, and embodying such conceptions of the nature of true religion, should be the work of forgers of a late age, is inconceivable. Its claims, in every page, to have been spoken or written by Moses would, in that case, be the frequent repetition of a conscious untruth by writers who, in all other respects, were ideal moralists. But the Book speaks for itself. It expressly states its Mosaic authorship,[13] and the internal evidence of its contents bears out this testimony. Its grand addresses to the tribes have a living power which witness to their genuineness. Every sentence carries us back to the wilderness

[1] Exod. xxii. 22. [2] Exod. xxii. 21. [3] Exod. xxii. 25, 26.
[4] Deut. xiv. 29; xvi. 11; xxvii. 17; xxvi. 12. [5] Deut. xxiv. 14.
[6] Deut. xv. [7] Deut. xxiii. 19; xxiv. 6, 10, etc.
[8] Deut. xxii. 1, 6, 9; xxv. 4. [9] Deut. xv. 12; xxi. 10; xxiii. 16.
[10] Deut. xxi. 10; xxii. 13; xxiv. 1 ff. [11] Deut. xxi. 18.
[12] Deut. xxiii. 24; xxv. 5 ff. [13] Deut. xxxi. 24.

life, or the scenes of the Holy Mount, or the days of Egyptian slavery. The words glow in each line with the emotions of a great leader, recounting to his contemporaries the marvellous story of their common experience. The enthusiasm they kindle, even to-day, though obscured by translation, reveals their matchless adaptation to the circumstances under which they were first spoken. Confidence for the future is evoked by remembrance of the past. The same God who had done mighty works for the tribes, since the Exodus, would cover their head in the day of battle with the nations of Palestine, soon to be invaded. Their great Lawgiver stands before us, vigorous in his hoary age, stern in his abhorrence of evil, earnest in his zeal for God, but mellowed in all relations to earth by his nearness to heaven. The commanding wisdom of his enactments, the dignity of his position as the founder of the nation and the first of prophets, enforce his utterances. But he touches our deepest emotions by the human tenderness that breathes in all his words. Standing on the verge of life, he speaks as a father, giving his parting counsels to those he loves; willing to depart and be with the God he has served so well, but fondly lengthening out his last farewell to the dear ones of earth. No book can compare with Deuteronomy in its mingled sublimity and tenderness. "It is," says Eichhorn, "the final survey of his laws by the Lawgiver himself, in which he explains what needs explanation, and improves what needs improvement. We have in it the last utterance of the father and leader of his people. The heat and fervour of every line show that countless emotions oppressed the soul of the great man as he wrote, and stamp the book, in every part, as composed at the mouth of the grave."[1] "Deuteronomy," says

[1] Eichhorn, *Einl.*, vol. iii. p. 224.

Moses Stuart, "appears to my mind, as it did to that of Eichhorn and Herder, as the earnest outpourings and admonitions of a heart which felt the deepest interest in the welfare of the Jewish nation, and realized that it must soon bid them farewell."[1] To defend the theory of its being a forgery, by urging that Ecclesiastes is attributed to Solomon, though not his composition, is to cite a case in no way parallel. Reflections on the vanity of life and its mysteries, put into the mouth of the wise king, do no wrong to any one, and befit the character of the supposed author. But to impose a code of laws on a nation, as given by Jehovah; to take heaven and earth to witness that Moses is the speaker and writer; to claim, in his name, to control the whole public and private life of the community, for all time, by counterfeit statutes and mock blessings and curses, would be inconceivable audacity on the part of an author of easy conscience, and an impossible crime to any mind capable, by its lofty morality and nearness in spirit to God, of writing such a book. Nor is it the least difficulty in the theory of its being a forgery, that the nation accepted it, at once, as a book known to their fathers for eight hundred years, which any one could in a moment have disproved.

An old Jewish apologue, quoted by Herder, may help us to realize the feelings with which the Law was received at first, and the joy at its re-discovery under Josiah. "The enemy of all good," it tells us, "learned that God had given earth a law in which all the wisdom of heaven lay hidden, and destined in the end to destroy the kingdom of darkness among men. He therefore hastened swiftly to this world, and asked it: 'Earth, where is that law which God has given thee?' But the earth answered, 'The Lord knows the ways of His wisdom; I know

[1] Stuart's *Hist of the O. T. Canon*, § 3.

them not.' Then he went to the sea, and to the depths beneath it, but the sea and the nether abyss said: 'It is not in me.' Next, he went to the kingdom of the dead, but the shades answered, 'We have heard the report of it from afar.'

"After he had wandered through the world, and through all the heathen nations who served him, he came to the desert of Arabia and saw a man whose countenance shone—Moses. Going to him in the guise of an angel of light, he sought to flatter him, and offered to be his disciple. 'Man of God,' said he, 'who possessest the wisdom of Jehovah, and hast all understanding of Elohim, and hast hidden all the secrets of the universe in thy law'—

"'Silence,' cried Moses, with a look that changed Satan at once into his own form—'Silence! The law is Jehovah's, not mine; with Him is wisdom and understanding, counsel and might;[1] as for man, the fear of Jehovah, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.'[2]

"Ashamed, Satan fell back and went away, and the angels of God appeared to minister to the lowly Great One. They taught him and he taught them. The Prince of the Law became his guardian spirit, and God Himself answered from the cloud—'Keep ye the law of Moses, My servant. Because he was humble, and gave me the glory, I have crowned him with glory for ever.'"[3]

[1] Prov. viii. 14. [2] Job xxviii. 28.

[3] Herder, *Geist vom Ebräischen Poesie*, vol. ii. p. 65. The preservation of the Law from the earliest times was doubtless much facilitated by the custom, still prevalent in the East, of committing sacred books to memory. Even at this day persons can be found in Egypt, who, though illiterate, can repeat the whole Koran by heart; and it was the boast of the Rabbis of the

To believe that a Book or Books, round which a veneration so touching had gathered centuries before Christ, and the rediscovery of which, in Josiah's day, revolutionized the history of Israel for all future ages, were mere forgeries of well nigh a thousand years after the date they claim, seems to require much greater credulity than is shown in frankly accepting them as what they assert themselves to be.

Middle Ages, that if every copy of the Talmud were destroyed, their disciples could reproduce it, without omission or error, from memory. Dr. Grove mentions also, that in the service of the Day of Atonement in the Samaritan Synagogue, the recitation of the Pentateuch was continued through the night, without even the feeble lamp which, on every other night of the year but this, burns in front of the holy books. The two priests and a few of the people knew the whole Pentateuch by heart. *Vacation Tourists*, 1861, p. 346.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE PASSOVER OF JOSIAH.

THE recovery of the ancient Book of the Law by Hilkiah had an immediate influence on the great religious movement which had already been some years in progress. How far the purification of the land from idolatry had gone before the finding of the Law is not told, but it is expressly said that its result was, that Josiah "put away,"[1] as far as possible, "the necromancers," who pretended to raise the dead and learn the future from them;[2] those professing to be possessed by an evil spirit, and to work spells and predict by its means;[3] the teraphim or household gods,[4] cherished as the protectors of a house or authors of its good fortune; and the idols, called in contempt, "blocks of wood," and "abominations," that were discovered in Judah and Jerusalem.[5]

[1] 2 Kings xxiii. 24. The verb means, to destroy, to burn, as well as to remove.

[2] 1 Sam. xxviii. 7 ff. Deut. xviii. 11. Lev. xix. 31; xx. 6, 27. The punishment of these sorcerers was death by stoning.

[3] *Fürst* and *Mühlau und Volck.* Lev. xix. 31; xx. 27. Deut. xviii. 11.

[4] See vol. i. pp. 433, 441; iii. p. 147.

[5] 2 Kings xxiii. 24; see Deut. iv. 25; Exod. xx. 4, 22; Deut. v. 8; vii. 25 (idols to be burned). Exod. xxxii. 20; Lev. xxvii. 28;

But all this was only a preparation for the formal restoration of the national religion. Many of its rites had fallen into disuse, or were not carried out with strict adherence to prescribed form. Hezekiah had kept the Passover with great solemnity nearly a century before, but it had probably been neglected during the long reign of Manasseh. It was now possible, however, to celebrate the feast with hitherto unknown exactness. Full details respecting its proper observance were to be found in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy,[1] and these were ordered to be studied by all the priests and Levites.[2] A great passover was then appointed to be held on the 14th day of Nisan, nearly our April, the first or "flower month;" known also as Abib, "the month of earing:"[3] in accordance with the terms of the original commands on the subject.[4] Hezekiah had varied from the law where he thought it right to do so,[5] keeping the feast on the second month—Iyar, nearly our May—and permitting the strangers from the remnant of the Northern tribes, who had the excuse of ignorance, to join in it, though not legally "clean." No variation was now required. The enthusiasm of the people was for the time roused to the utmost by the finding of the Law, and they were eager to comply with it on every

Deut. xiii. 10; xvii. 5 (Hebrew idolators to be stoned). Exod. xxiii. 13, 24; Lev. xxvi. 1; Deut. xxvii. 15. That Saul (1 Sam. xxvii. 3) should have tried to banish necromancers from the land, shows that he knew the requirements of the Law. It must, then, have been at least as old as his day.

[1] Exod. xii. 3, 43; xiii. 5. Lev. xxiii. 4; xxviii. 16. Num. ix. 1. Deut. xvi. 1.

[2] 2 Chron. xxxv. 2.

[3] "Coming into ear."

[4] Geikie's *Life of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 278. Graetz says the Passover was held in the spring of B.C. 621.

[5] 2 Chron. xxx. 2, 17–20.

point.[1] Josiah was the soul of the revival in this, as in other directions. He, not the high priest or dignitaries, secured the enrolling of the ordinary priests in their respective divisions or "courses,"[2] or successive turns of service, and it was he especially who quickened their zeal by animating words, and saw to their being carefully instructed in the details of their duties, according to the letter of the law.[3]

Priests and Levites, the sacred caste,[4] and as such the official teachers of the Law, were, further, sent through the country, to instruct the whole people in the preparations it demanded for the Passover, and in the general knowledge of its precepts.[5] Levites, strictly so called, were directed to restore the Ark, from the spot where it had been hidden during the reigns of Manasseh and Amon, to its old place in the temple, it being their pre-

[1] 2 Chron. xxxiv. 32, 33. Deut. vi. 5. Jer. xxii. 15.

[2] Lit., "their watches." Gesenius translates the words "*confirmed* in their duties, or offices."

[3] Compare the exhortation of Hezekiah to the priests in similar circumstances, 2 Chron. xxix. 5-11. It is very noteworthy that both priests and Levites (ver. 4) are called Levites in ver. 5. How utterly this language, in a book so late as 2 Chron., dating from the Persian age, explodes the theory of the late origin of the Middle Books of the Pentateuch, on the ground that they sharply discriminate between priests and Levites, contrary to the usage in Deuteronomy!

[4] Exod. xxviii. 41; xl. 15. Num. xviii. 6; iii. 10, 12, 45.

[5] In the Hebrew text the teachers "of all Israel," that is of Judah, Jerusalem, and the remnant of the Ten Tribes, are called "Levites," which in this case also, contrary to the new critics, must include priests, if they, alone, are not meant. Many manuscripts read for Levites, the Mibînim, or "instructed," "well-skilled," and this is the word used for the teachers of the Law, the precursors of "the Scribes," in Neh. viii. 7-9, 10, 29; Ezra viii. 16. See Leyrer and Naegelsbach in *Herzog*, vols. iv. p. 170; xiii. p. 733. See also Deut. xxiii. 10; 2 Chron. xxx. 22; Mal. ii. 7.

rogative to carry it on their shoulders when it had to be moved.[1] Levites were now to bear it to the Holy Place,[2] which they alone could enter; priests lifting it, thence, into the Holy of Holies.[3] It was the last time they were to have this great honour, which their forefathers had enjoyed a thousand years before. Henceforth, the sacred chest was to remain permanently in the Holy of Holies, and the Levites were to attend exclusively to the ritual of the temple and its minor duties, taking care, above all, that every detail of the legal prescriptions was exactly observed by the crowds who came up to the temple, or to the feasts. The Levitical purity of the worshippers; the provision of wood, salt, etc., for the altar; the inspection of victims for sacrifice, and their being properly slaughtered; the superintendence of the Passover, and of the other feasts, constituted from this time their distinctive office.[4]

The task before the Commission deputed to instruct the people for the approaching Passover would have been easy, even with only the details of ritual in the Books of the Law. Besides these, however, they had sub-

[1] Num. iv. 15; vii. 9; x. 21.

[2] Thenius, *Die B. d. Könige*, p. 434.

[3] Keil, *B. d. Chronik*, p. 377. The Rabbis say that Josiah concealed the Ark, to prevent its being carried off to Babylon. Barclay's *Talmud*, p. 345. There was no Ark in the second temple, and 2 Macc. ii. 4, perhaps on the strength of Jer. iii. 16, attributes this to its concealment by Jeremiah, for which there is no ground. Hitzig thinks that it had fallen to pieces from old age and decay, while hidden, in the time of Manasseh. But articles of wood in the dry climate of the East, last for immense periods, as may be seen in any Egyptian collections. Neither in Jer. iii. 16, nor elsewhere, is it said that it was destroyed, or that it perished during the reign of Manasseh. See Graf, *Der P. Jeremia*, on iii. 16.

[4] *Rabbi Salomon*, quoted by Keil, *B. d. Chron.*, p. 376.

ordinate helps of the greatest value, in ancient manuscripts [1] of the forms used by David and Solomon, which thus supplied precedents and explanations of the highest authority. That such written documents should have existed in the seventh century before Christ, and that they should have survived the stormy years of the persecution, is a striking proof that other documents, such as the Books of the Law, may also have existed from early times, though till Josiah's reign we have no intimation respecting them; for these Service Books of the earliest days of the monarchy are noticed only in this casual allusion, centuries after their composition.[2]

Minute instructions were further given to the Levites themselves. They were to minister in the temple, as in the days of David and his great son; a section of each Levitical "House"[3] being set apart for the service of each "House" of the people.[4] Instructions were also given them how to kill the Passover lamb properly,

[1] 2 Chron. xxxv. 3.

[2] The new critics try to escape this difficulty by saying that we should understand "precepts," or "ordinances," rather than writings. But as Bertheau well says, we should then, as in 2 Chron. xxix. 25, have had, "according to the commandment of David, etc." Two words are used. The first K'tab, occurs in the Old Testament twelve times, and each time is translated "writing." The second, Michtab, occurs eight times, and is, also, always translated "writing." K'tab is, in fact, a word of the later Hebrew, for the earlier, Saipher, a book. See Ezra ii. 62; Neh. vii. 64; Dan. x. 21. It is found in Syriac (Kotob), in Arabic (Ketibe), and in Ethiopic, with the same meaning, of a writing or book. Both words are from the verb Katah, "to write." In 2 Chron. xxxiv. 13, we read of "Levite Scribes." Their life, given to copying sacred or other writings, secured the preservation of those of the prophets, and was doubtless also, in large measure, given to transcribing parts or the whole of the Law.

[3] Lit., "House of the Fathers." [4] See verse 12.

when the feast came, and to "sanctify"[1] themselves by washing, before they handed the blood to the priest; how, also, to prepare the lambs for the people, in strict accordance with the Divine injunctions "by the hand of Moses," in the written Law just recovered.[2]

The approach of the great day found multitudes assembled in Jerusalem, including many survivors of the Ten Tribes, from distant parts of the North.[3] Vast numbers, however, from poverty or ignorance, or from the difficulty of obtaining a paschal lamb or kid, had not provided themselves with them; for, as yet, no flocks were collected beforehand at Jerusalem for sale at the feast, as in later times. Thirty thousand lambs and kids, therefore, were distributed by the king among the poor, and those who from other causes were unsupplied. Three thousand bullocks from the crown pastures were added to this royal bounty, to provide materials for the seven days feast that followed the Passover.[4] The nobility were no less liberal, giving great numbers of cattle and lambs and goats to the priests and Levites,[5] and to the people, for free offerings. Nor were the dignitaries of the temple[6] behind hand. The high

[1] 2 Chron. xxix. 5, 15; xxx. 3, 15. Ezra vi. 20.

[2] 2 Chron. xxxv. 6. The Levites had charge of killing the Passover lamb for every one who was not "clean." 2 Chron. xxx. 17. To the latest times it was the custom of each Israelite to slaughter his own lamb or kid, the place being the temple court, after the sanctuary was built. *Pesachim*, v. 6–8. But on special occasions, such as the Passovers of Hezekiah, Josiah, and Ezra, the slaughter of the lambs was committed to the Levites. 2 Chron. xxx. xxxv. Ezra vi.

[3] 2 Chron. xxxv. 18.

[4] *Keil*, p. 378.

[5] In Hezekiah's time the nobles gave away 1,000 oxen, and 10,000 sheep.

[6] The lay "princes" are called Sarim; those of the temple

priest, Hilkiah, of the line of Eleazar; Zechariah, apparently his deputy; and Jehiel, probably the head of the line of Ithamar,[1] gave 2,600 lambs and kids, and 300 oxen, to the priests, their subordinates, while six of the principal Levites,[2] officials, apparently, at the head of the working departments of the temple, its stores, protection, and oversight, gave their brethren 5,000 lambs and kids, and 500 oxen.

Thus, on the eve of the Passover, everything was ready. The priests, in their white robes, with bare feet and covered head, stood at their posts at the altar;[3] the Levites in their successive courses, at their side, according to the king's command.[4] As the sun was setting, and before the stars appeared,[5] the lambs and kids were slaughtered and flayed by hundreds of Levites, the blood being handed by them in bowls to the priests, to sprinkle on the altar; each Levite having first washed himself in the temple laver. The part of the victims required for a burnt offering,[6] was then given back to each householder, who forthwith bore it to the priest, to lay on the altar flames.[7] The same was done with the oxen during

"Nĕgidim." The words are lit., "princes or rulers of the House of God."

[1] This line still survived after the Exile. See Ezra viii. 2.

[2] Levites of the same name as the first three here (verse 9), occur in the record of Hezekiah's feast. 2 Chron. xxxi. 12–15. But the names of priests were largely hereditary, or perhaps, as Bertheau suggests, these were the names of "families" or "Houses."

[3] 2 Chron. xxx. 16. [4] 2 Chron. xxxv. 4.

[5] Deut. xvi. 6. Exod. xii. 6. Lev. xxiii. 5. Num. ix. 3–5. Josephus says that the lambs were slain from the ninth to the eleventh hour, from three to five o'clock. *Bell. Jud.*, VI. ix. 3 See *Pesachim*, v. 3.

[6] Lev. iii. 6–17. [7] Keil thus explains 2 Chron. xxxv. 12.

the next week, parts of them being sacred to the altar, while the rest remained the property of the offerer, to whom it was returned.[1] The cooking of the flesh for the people, however, was reserved, on this occasion, to the Levites, perhaps to guard against ritual errors when everything was virtually new. The lambs and young goats were duly roasted, according to the Law,[2] but the "holy flesh,"[3] as the slaughtered oxen were called, was baked or boiled in pots, kettles, and other vessels.[4] The strain put on the priests and Levites was almost beyond human endurance, for they could take neither rest nor refreshment till their labours were over. Each course of both Levites and priests had only snatches of leisure. Not only that night, but each day of the following week, the whole time from morning till evening, during the seven days of unleavened bread, was occupied in preparing and burning the vast multitude of offerings from so many victims. During all these days the services of the temple choir were brought into requisition at intervals—the singers of the famous clan of Asaph, chanting, in relays, the psalms for the season, appointed centuries before, by David, Asaph, and Jeduthun. Neither they, indeed, nor the watchers of the gates, could leave the temple, but had their food brought to them by the Levites.[5] Such a Passover had never been held since

[1] The fat of the oxen belonged to the altar as a thankoffering. Lev. iii. 3.

[2] Exod. xii. 7-9.

[3] 2 Chron. xxxv. 13, the "holy."

[4] 1 Sam. ii. 13, 14. The word is the same for cooking both the lamb and the oxen, but the addition of "by fire" marks that the lamb was roasted. The boiling or baking is prescribed in Lev. viii. 31; Exod. xxix. 31; Lev. vi. 28.

[5] 2 Chron. xxxv. 15. It is striking and instructive to read in verse 16, that all the arrangements for this great feast were made

the days of Samuel; for the requirements of the Law had never before been so minutely observed.[1] Nor was the rejoicing of the following week less remarkable.

The influence of such a celebration of the great national feast was felt in all directions. It proclaimed the full restoration of the worship of Jehovah, and kindled an enthusiasm for His service in many. Hebrews from all parts of the land had been present, and carried back to Shechem, Shiloh, Samaria, and elsewhere, a loyalty to the temple at Jerusalem, which continued till the destruction of the city by Nebuchadnezzar, and even after the Return.[2] So great an event, indeed, was it thought, that Ezekiel dates the opening of his prophecies from it.[3]

It seems probable that we have in the eighty-first Psalm a relic of this great solemnity.[4] If so, we may picture to ourselves all the Levites "that could skill of instruments of music,"[5] and "the singers, the sons of Asaph,"[6] chanting and playing in mingled harmony, words still familiar to ourselves; the multitudes in the courts beneath kneeling in worship as the music rolled out its sounds.

according to the commandment of King Josiah, a young man of 26; not according to that of the high priest. By "burnt offerings" (verse 16) are to be understood the usual offerings at the Passover and feast of unleavened bread; not "burnt offerings" in the strict sense. None of these were burnt at the Passover season except the daily sacrifice. Num. xxviii. 4.

[1] So, rightly, *Keil. Clericus.*

[2] Jer. xli. 5. Ezra iv. 2.

[3] In Ezekiel i. 1, the date used is the thirtieth year from Josiah's Reformation and Passover; that is, in the fifth year of King Jehoiakim's captivity. *Graetz*, vol. ii. p. 321.

[4] *Delitzsch. Moll. Graetz.*

[5] 2 Chron. xxxiv. 12. [6] 2 Chron. xxxv. 15.

Sing aloud[1] unto God, our Strength;
Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob;
Lift up the psalm; sound the timbrel (ye choirs of Levites);
The pleasant lyre and the harp!
Blow the trumpet on the new moon (of the month Nisan, ye priests)!
On the full-moon; the day of our passover feast!
For the feast is a law for Israel; an ordinance of the God of Jacob,
He ordained it in Joseph,[2] when He went forth to judge[3] the land of Egypt.[4]

In that day I heard the voice of One, whom as yet I knew not, saying:—
"I have lifted the slave burden from Israel's shoulders,
I have set his hands free from the basket (in which he carried the earth).
Thou calledst (on Me) in trouble, and I delivered thee from it;
I answered thee through the veil of the thunder cloud,
I put thee to the test at the waters of Meribah![5]
Hear, O My people, and I will give thee counsel;
O Israel, would thou didst but hearken to Me!"

(This is what I said to thee!) "There shall be no god of a foreign people in thee;
Thou shalt not worship any god of a foreign land.
I, I am Jehovah, thy God, who led thee up out of Egypt;
Open wide thy mouth and I will fill it!"

But My people would not hearken to My voice;
Israel was not willing to obey Me,
So I gave them over to the hardness of their own hearts;
They walked in their own counsels!

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[1] Ps. lxxxi.

[2] A pathetic name for the Hebrews collectively.

[3] Lit., "against."

[4] Exod. xi. 4; xii. 27.

[5] Exod. xvii. 7. The word "Selah," here, means that at this point the crowd bent the head, while the music played an interlude, giving time for solemn thought. *Hitzig*, and *Delitzsch*.

O that My people would hearken to Me;
O that Israel would walk in My ways!
How soon [1] would I humble their foes,
And turn My hand against their oppressors! [2]
The haters of Jehovah would submit themselves to Him,
And the prosperity of Israel would endure for ever!
I would feed them [3] with the fat of wheat; [4]
With honey from the combs, in the clefts of the rock, would I satisfy thee (O Israel)!

Yet, amidst all the enthusiasm, which found expression in a festival so strictly observed and so numerously attended, there were many who remained indifferent and secretly hostile. The reformation had been imposed on the nation by the will of the king, and had not the depth of a spontaneous movement. The tone of the Psalm just given is sad, amidst its call to rejoicing; it bewails the stubborn ungodliness of the community as a whole, and pleads for a better frame of mind. The same characteristics show themselves in the language of Jeremiah in an address delivered about this time. He hints at deadly opposition to himself for his plain speaking, and even at conspiracy against Josiah for his religious innovations. First addressing his brethren the prophets, he urges them to diligence; impressing on the people of Judah and Jerusalem, the nature, obligations, and penal sanctions, of the covenant into which they had entered with Jehovah, through their representatives, the elders. The Book of the Law in which it was embodied had been unknown for generations, and it was therefore imperative that the population, as a whole, should be made familiar with it, as

[1] Lit., "as in a moment."

[2] From the verb, "to distress, harass, vex."

[3] Delitzsch continues the first person here. This Psalm was sung in the second temple on the fifth day of the week. Barclay's *Talmud*, p 254.

[4] Deut. xxxii. 14.

the only hope of such an intelligent obedience as would secure its promises and avert its curses. Hence the prophet began:—

Hear ye,[1] O my brother prophets, the words of this Covenant,[2] speak thus to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel; Cursed is the man who obeys not the words of this covenant,[3] which I commanded your fathers in the day when I led them from the land of Egypt,[4] a fiery furnace to them—terrible as the furnace in which iron is smelted[5]—and said, "Obey My voice, and do My will, according to all that I command you; so shall ye be My people, and I will be your God."[6] That I may fulfil the oath[7] which I swore

[1] Jer. xi. 1-5.

[2] The word "covenant," as the name for the "Book of the Law," found by Hilkiah, or for its most distinguishing feature, is of constant recurrence in the different Books of the Pentateuch, *e.g.* Exod. ii. 24; vi. 4, 5; xix. 5; xxiv. 7, etc. Lev. ii. 13; xxvi. 9; xv. 25; xlii. 44, 45. Num. x. 33; xiv. 44; xxv. 13. Deut. iv. 13, 23, 31; v. 2, 3; vii. 2, 9, 12; viii. 18; ix. 9, 11, 15; xxix. 1, 9, etc. See, also, 2 Kings xxii. 8; xxiii. 2. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 30; xxxi. 16. There can be no doubt that the prophet refers to the covenant made for the nation, by Josiah and the elders, and based on the "Book of the Law" recently discovered.

[3] Deut. xxvii. 26.

[4] It is clear from these words that Jeremiah either honestly believed that the "Book of the Law," just found, was the genuine ancient record of God's words to Israel at Sinai, or that he pretended to believe it was, and palmed it off on his fellow-prophets and the people as such. The new critics may think it a light matter to charge the prophet with wilful fraud, but most people will hold their doing so as a very grave immorality.

[5] Deut. v. 6. Job vi. 12. Isa. xlviii. 10. 1 Kings viii. 51. Jer. iv. 20.

[6] This is a reference to Lev. xxvi. 3, 12, and Exod. vi. 7; xxix. 45. Deut. xxvii. 15–26. How could they then have been composed after the Captivity.

[7] Gen. xv. 18; xxii. 16; xxiv. 7; xxvi. 3; l. 24. Exod. xiii. 5, 11; xxxiii. 1. Num. xiv. 16, 30; xxxii. 11. Deut. i. 8, 35; vi. 10, and eleven times more.

to your fathers; to give them a land flowing with milk and honey,[1] as is the case this day.

Then answered I, Jeremiah, when God spoke thus to me, *A*men,[2] O Jehovah!

A Divine commission to make known all the words of the new found Law, throughout the kingdom, was at the same time given to the prophet.

Then Jehovah said to me,[3] Read aloud all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying: "Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them! For I have earnestly exhorted your fathers ever since the day when I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, to this present time, from early morning on, urging them, continually, saying, 'Obey My voice!' But they did not listen, or incline their ear, but walked, each, in the stubbornness of his evil heart, and, therefore, have I brought upon them all the words of this covenant which I commanded them to do, but which they have not done."

How long Jeremiah was occupied in this mission through the land, making known the details of the newly discovered Law, is not said. But, however successful with individuals, he had to lament the persistent obduracy of vast numbers. It would even seem, as already said, that the heathen party plotted secretly against Josiah, for his reforms; accompanied, as they had been, by the slaughter of the idol priests, in accordance with the injunctions of the Law.[4] For, with all the gentleness and love of the Pentateuch, in many utterances, a spirit of fierce sternness towards idolatry marked it as only a temporary code, to be one day superseded by the sacred

[1] Exod. iii. 8–17; xiii. 5; xxxiii. 3. Lev. xx. 24. Num. xiii. 27; xiv. 8; xvi. 13, 14. Deut. vi. 3; xi. 9; xxvi. 15; xxvii. 3; xxxi. 20.

[2] Deut. vii. 12. Gen. xxii. 16; xv. 18; xxiv. 7.

[3] Jer. xi. 6–8.

[4] Lev. xxvii. 18. Num. xxxiii. 52. Deut. vii. 2; xx. 16, 17.

charity of Jesus Christ. Blood had, indeed, been shed by Manasseh, but Josiah also had shed it, and that on the very altars. The one persecution had brought a reaction in favour of the worship of Jehovah; the other was now preparing a revulsion in favour of heathenism.

And Jehovah further said to me,[1] There is a conspiracy among the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They have returned to the iniquities of their early[2] forefathers, who refused to hear My words; and they, in this day, have gone after other gods, to serve them. The House of Israel and the House of Judah have broken My Covenant, which I made with their fathers. Therefore, thus says Jehovah: Behold I bring evil on them, which they shall not be able to escape; when they cry to Me, I will not listen to them. The towns of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will go and cry to the gods to whom they burn incense, but they will give them no help in the time of trouble. For thy gods, O Judah, are become as many as thy cities, and ye have set up in Jerusalem as many altars to The Shame as there are streets; altars to burn incense to Baal![3]

But, as for thee,[4] do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or supplication for them, for I will not listen when they cry to Me in the time of trouble!

What has Judah, once My beloved,[5] to do in My House? They who only practise deceit?[6] Can vows and the hallowed flesh of offerings ward from thee the calamity that threatens?[7] Then

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[1] Jer. xi. 9-13.

[2] Lit., "first." Jeremiah thus knew the history of the nation from the first—that is, he knew the Pentateuch.

[3] This and the previous verse are almost the same as chap. ii. 27, 28. Streets = open places. See chap. vii. 17.

[4] Jer. xi. 14-17. [5] See Jer. xii. 7.

[6] To act as she does—to do wickedness? *Bredenkamp*, p. 111, and others.

[7] The received text is untranslatable. The version given is that of the Sept., Keil, Hitzig, Eichhorn, Ewald, De Wette (who has "iniquity" for "calamity"), Graf, Bredenkamp, *Gesetz u. Propheten*, p. 111.

mayest thou indeed rejoice! Jehovah called thee a green olive tree, fair with goodly fruit,[1] but amidst the uproar of a mighty storm He has laid fire to it, and its branches are broken off by the tempest.[2] For Jehovah of Hosts, who planted thee, has decreed evil against thee, for the wickedness of the House of Israel and of the House of Judah, which they have chosen to do —to provoke Me to anger by offering incense to Baal.

A still more bitter proof of the malignity of public feeling towards the friends of the old religion was now, however, to horrify the prophet. Living amongst his neighbours at Anathoth, with no suspicion of danger, a plot against his life was suddenly revealed to him. He was to realize the abiding truth, that a prophet has no honour in his native place.[3] His plain speaking had infuriated the worldly-minded priests of his village, till now, apparently, his head-quarters, though his mission often took him to Jerusalem, and had even of late required him to make preaching circuits over the whole country, in connection with the new religious Covenant.

Jehovah[4] made it known to me, and then only I knew it, when Thou showedst me their doings. I was like a house lamb[5] that is led, without dreaming of it, to the slaughter; I did not know that they had plotted evil against me, saying, "Let us destroy the tree with its fruit,[6] and cut him off from the land of the

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[1] The individuals are so called.

[2] The figure seems to be that of a mighty wind, which has at once fanned and spread the fire and also broken off the branches. It refers to the ruin caused by Assyria and to be caused by Babylon, and includes the fall of the Ten Tribes. The storm is the wild confusion of war.

[3] Luke iv. 28. [4] Jer. xi. 18-23.

[5] A pet lamb brought up in a household * is still common in the tents of Arabs, and was no less so among the Jews.

[6] Lit., "bread." In this case his hateful prophecies.

* 2 Sam. xii. 3.

living, that his name may be no longer remembered." But, O Jehovah of hosts, that judgest righteously, and triest the reins and the heart,[1] let me see Thy vengeance on them; for to Thee have I committed my cause.[2] Therefore, Jehovah speaks thus against the men of Anathoth, who sought my life, saying to me, "Prophecy not[3] thus, in the name of Jehovah, or you will die at our hands." For this cause Jehovah of hosts has said, "Behold, I will punish them. The young men, fit for arms, shall die by the sword; their young sons and their daughters shall die by the famine of a siege, and no remnant of them will be left; for I will bring evil on the men of Anathoth in the year of their visitation."

The old belief in temporal rewards and punishments had long been shaken. Asaph, in the seventy-third psalm, had expressed the perplexity of thoughtful minds on the subject, and now Jeremiah was no less troubled at the prosperity of the men of Anathoth, who sought to murder him for speaking the words put into his lips by God.

Thou art too righteous,[4] O Jehovah, for me to contend with Thee: yet, let me state my case to Thee, to learn Thy will. Why is the way of the wicked prosperous? Why does it go well with all who act so treacherously? Thou hast planted them and they have struck root: they grow vigorously and bear fruit: yet they are hypocrites; for though Thou art near their mouths, Thou art far from their hearts.[5] But Thou, Jehovah, knowest me, that I am Thy true servant; Thou seest me, and triest my heart, how it stands towards Thee. Drag them away like sheep to the shambles, and give them up[6] to a day of slaughter! How long shall the land mourn, as it now does, in a sore drought, and the green of the whole country wither? Through the wickedness of

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[1] To Thee the most secret thoughts are known.

[2] Lit., "on Thee do I roll my cause."

[3] Amos ii. 12. [4] Jer. xii. 1–4

[5] They honour Thee with their lips, but their heart is far from Thee.

[6] Lit., "consecrate, devote them."

its inhabitants its cattle and birds are gone; and yet my enemies say, "God does not trouble Himself about our future: we shall go on to the end unpunished!"[1]

God, however, answers that all the past is light compared with what awaits the prophet. His fellow-villagers have conspired to murder him; but, hereafter, even his own blood relations will turn against him. Jehovah now speaks:

"If when thou thus runnest[2] with the footmen,[3] they weary thee, how canst thou hope to contend with horses? If, up to this time, thou hast felt, in a measure, secure, as in a land of peace, what wilt thou do when thou art, as it were, in the tangled thickets of Jordan, full of lions and beasts of prey?[4] For even thy brethren and thy father's house;[5] even *they* have been faithless to thee: even they call after thee with loud voice, to seize thee, or strike thee down!"

Yet his question does not remain unanswered. Anathoth and Judah will not always escape. The Divine judgment is approaching.

I have forsaken My House,[6] says Jehovah: I have cast off My Heritage! I have given the dearly beloved of My soul into

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[1] This seems the sense of the text.

[2] Jer. xii. 5, 6.

[3] Footmen = running couriers. See vol. i. p. 451. "Passing through the bazaar, one of the Pacha's boys rode past us, mounted on an Arab horse. A man in white cotton ran before him at full speed, clearing the way with voice and arms." *Narr. of a Mission of Inquiry*, p. 49.

[4] The "swelling of Jordan" should be "the pride"; in allusion to the luxuriant thickets of tamarisks, poplars, reeds, etc., the special lair of all beasts of prey, especially of the lion. *Schubert's Reise*, vol. iii. pp. 82, 84. 2 Kings vi. 1–7. Jer. xlix. 19. Zech. xi. 3. *Wilton's Negeb*, pp. 42, 196. See p. 165. Vol. iii. p. 388.

[5] They were priests; the family were priestly.

[6] Jer. xii. 7-13. By "House" the nation is meant.

the hand of her enemies! My Heritage has been fierce against me, as a lion in the *yaar*:[1] it roared against Me; therefore I have withdrawn My love from it, and given it up to its enemies, as if I hated it. Is My Heritage a speckled vulture to Me, that vultures are gathered round about her,[2] to fall on her? Up, cause all the beasts of the field to assemble, bring them hither to devour! Many shepherds[3]—the leaders of invading hosts—have destroyed My vineyard; trodden My enclosure under foot; and turned it, once so beautiful, into a desolate wilderness. It has been made a waste; it mourns aloud round Me, in its desolation; the whole land is made a desert, because no man has laid My warnings to heart. The plunderers have come up to all the bare heights of the wilderness pastures; for the sword of Jehovah devours from one end of the land to the other: no flesh has any peace. They have sown wheat and reaped thorns:[4] they have tired themselves out and profited nothing. They will reap only shame at their harvest, because of the fierce anger of Jehovah!

## Yet the enemies of Israel will not escape unpunished.

Thus saith Jehovah,[5] against all my evil neighbours that touch the land I have given as an inheritance to My people Israel;—Behold I will pluck them up[6] from their own land, and I will

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[1] See vol. iv. p. 358.

[2] The zoological references are not clear in this passage. *Āīt*, the first word, is rendered by Mühlau und Volck, and by Fürst, a vulture = the screamer. Gesenius makes it mean also, "a beast of prey." Tsabūa, the second word, is the participle of a verb, and means to be coloured or striped. Hence Mühlau und Volck render it both thus, and also as the word for a hyæna. Tristram thinks the hyæna meant, *N. H. B.*, p. 108. Arnold (*Herzog*, vol. ii. p. 29) translates it hyæna. But nearly all the critics prefer "vulture."

[3] Jer. vi. 3. The idea which suggested this use of the word "shepherd" is probably the terror felt by the settled fellahin of Judah at the wandering Arab "shepherds," whose life was plunder. Gen. xlvi. 34.

[4] Kotzim, a word which includes all prickly or thorny plants *Tristram*, p. 428.

[5] Jer. xii. 14–17. [6] As a plant.

pluck out the House of Judah from among them. And after I have thus plucked them out, I will again have compassion on them, and bring them back, each to his own heritage, and to his own land. And if they then learn the ways of My people—to swear by My name "as truly as Jehovah lives," as they taught My people to swear by Baal, they shall be received[1] into the midst of My people. But if they will not hear, I will root out and utterly destroy such a nation, says Jehovah.

It may be that in the fiftieth Psalm we have another relic of these days, when Judah, under Josiah, had pledged itself anew in covenant with Jehovah.[2] In any case it is at least as old as Josiah's reign; possibly much older, and it is of special interest since it presents with unique clearness the prophetic teaching with respect to sacrifice, echoing the words of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah. Its one great theme is, that the gross material idea of an offering or sacrifice, in itself securing peace with God, is worse than misleading; and that the thought of its being a service to the Almighty to make such gifts to Him, is baseless folly. Sacrifice is represented as the divinely appointed and sanctioned ratification of Jehovah's covenant with His people, but only when followed by a godly life, and presented by a sincere and humble penitent. The relation of the ritual law to the moral—a lesson of infinite value for all time—is proclaimed. "It is well," says the Psalmist in effect, "that the smoke of offerings should rise from the altar, but unless the incense of the heart rise with it, it profits nothing."

[1] Lit., "built." The return of the Moabites is mentioned in chap. xlviii. 47. That of the Ammonites in chap. xlix. 6.

[2] See Ps. l. 5. Ewald assigns it to this time. Delitzsch and Moll merely give it as a Psalm of Asaph. Bredenkamp shows forcibly that it cannot be a Psalm of the Exile or after it, but comes to us from an earlier age. *Gesetz und Propheten*, p. 63.

Jehovah, the God of gods, speaks,
Calling the earth, from the rising of the sun to its going down.
Elohim shines forth out of Zion—the perfection of beauty!
Our God comes, and will not keep silence;
Fire devours before Him, and a great tempest is round about Him!
He calls to the heavens above, and to the earth,
That He is about to judge His people!
"Gather my saints[1] together to Me:
Those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice,"
And let the heavens proclaim His righteousness,
For God Himself is judge! Selah.

"Hear, My people, and I will speak;
O Israel, and I will bear witness against thee!
I am Elohim, thy God![2]
I do not reprove[3] Thee for failure in offering thy ordinary sacrifices;
And as to thy whole-burnt-offerings, they are continually before Me.

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[1] Lit., "Hasidim;" rendered elsewhere in A.V., the "merciful," "godly," "holy." After the Return, this was the name assumed by the Hebrew Puritans, or given to them. They were known as the Aniyim, or humble, or afflicted; the Ebionim, or poor; and the Ḥasidim or godly—names taken from the prophetical writings, or Psalms. Men like Mattathias, the father of the Maccabees, were chiefs of the Ḥasidim. See Herzog's *Encyk.*, vols. i. p. 386; ii. pp. 637 ff.; v. p. 578; xi. p. 501; xiii. pp. 735 ff.; xvii. p. 284.

[2] Quoted from Exod. xx. 2. It is curious to notice in this Psalm the use of both Jehovah and Elohim as names for God. Jehovah occurs in verse 1, and yet through the rest of the Psalm He is called Elohim. The idea of deciding as to the age, etc., of documents, from the use of one sacred name or the other, is pressed altogether too far. Amongst ourselves one suppliant might address the Deity as "O Lord"; another as "O God"; but surely that says nothing. The "Elohim theory" has, in fact, been reduced by its advocates to the ridiculous. Learned and clever men, as we all know, are apt to get astride hobbies, and to ride them very wildly.

[3] The word also means "to punish."

But what value are they to Me, or what pleasure?
I need not take[1] any bullock out of thy house,
Or he-goats out of thy folds;
For every beast of the forest[2] is Mine,
And the cattle upon a thousand hills.[3]
I know all the fowls of the mountains,
And whatever moves on the field is before Me.
If I were hungry I would not tell thee;
For the world is Mine, and the fulness thereof!

"Do I eat the flesh of oxen?
Do I drink the blood of he-goats?
Offer as sacrifice to Elohim the prayer of thanksgiving,
And pay thy vows to the Most High,
And then call upon Me in the day of trouble
So, shall I deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me!"

But to the wicked, Elohim says:

"How darest thou recount My statutes,
Or take My covenant into thy lips,
Whilst thou yet hatest instruction,
And castest My words behind thy back?
When thou seest a thief thou runnest with him,
And thou art a partaker with adulterers.
Thou lettest thy mouth loose to evil,
And thy tongue plots deceit.
As thou sittest, thou speakest against thy brother;
Thou layest a stumbling block for thine own mother's son.
Such things hast thou done, and, because I kept silence,
Thinkest thou I am altogether such an one as thyself?
But I will punish thee, and set the truth before thy eyes!"

O mark ye this, ye that forget God,
Lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver!
He who offers as his sacrifice the prayer of thanksgiving,

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[1] *De Wette. Bredenkamp. Delitzsch.*

[2] The *yaar.*

[3] A thousand beasts are on my hills. *Bredenkamp.* Ewald says "great beasts," for cattle.

Honours me aright; to him who takes heed to his walk,
Will I give to enjoy the salvation of God.[1]

Thus were the deep problems of life being pondered among the faithful worshippers of Jehovah in these years of revived hope and energy. Outward forms and ceremonies were being appraised at their true worth, and clearer insight gained as to the essentials of religion. In all ages, indeed, sincere spirits had felt that "bodily exercise profiteth little," but in an age of rites and symbols, when men were contented to have their religion performed for them by a professional caste, it was of supreme moment that psalms such as this should strike the keynote of a higher and truer ideal. Still nobler realizations were close at hand. A few years more, and the prophet Habakkuk would anticipate the cardinal truth of Christianity, that the just shall live by his faith, not by works alone; an utterance repeated in the Epistles to the Romans, the Galatians and the Hebrews, as the exact expression of Christian doctrine.[2]

[1] For parallel passages see, among others, Hosea vi. 6; Micah vi. 6-8; Isa. i. 11-15.

[2] Rom. i. 17. Gal. iii. 11. Heb. x. 38.

# CHAPTER XII.

## THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

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|---|---|---|
| Jehoahaz, 610 (three months. | King of Egypt: Necho II. 612–596. | Fall of Nineveh, 609–606.[2] |
| Jehoiakim, 610–589. | Kings of Babylon: Nabopolassar, died 604.[1] Nebuchadnezzar, 604–568. | Battle of Carchemish, 605. |
| | | King of Media: Cyaxares. |

THE great Passover had been celebrated in the year B.C. 622, when Josiah was twenty-six years of age, and twelve years of his reign were yet to come. Respecting the events of these, however, we know virtually nothing, though they were, doubtless, stirring and momentous enough; exhibiting a steady growth of the internal strength of the nation, and the development of its resources. The thorough organization of the army, and the eager military spirit, which made possible the final catastrophe at Megiddo, imply a vast activity in every department of public life. Josiah had, in fact, shown a precocious maturity in many directions. Marrying at the age of thirteen,[3] he had openly entered upon his great religious revolution when he was twenty, and before his famous Passover, had extended his sway, as

[1] *Schrader, Riehm.* [2] *Schrader.*

[3] 2 Kings xxii. 1, compared with xxiii. 26.

already noticed, over the lands of the Ten Tribes, now inviting occupation through the decline of Assyria. The irruption of the so-called Scythian hordes in the earlier part of his reign must have necessitated thorough military organization, and this, perhaps, gave a colour, in one respect, to his general policy. It is not known how far his conquests extended, but they apparently embraced some of the neighbouring territories besides that of Israel. It is possible indeed that he may have dreamed, as Ewald fancies, of restoring the ancient glory of the kingdom of David,[1] but, if so, the result was in the end disastrous.

Earnest, able and upright in his home government, and brilliant in his external relations, the life of the young king must, nevertheless, have been far from happy. Himself sincerely godly, he had fallen on evil times. His vigorous measures of religious reform, though supported by the fickle populace, were, as has been said, only outwardly successful. They had the fatal defect of being compulsory; mere acts of the ruling power unsupported by the good-will of the people; and hence they resulted in a revival of only the forms of religion without an accompaniment of its spirit. Not that this lessens the admiration due to the fervent and noble zeal that inspired them. In the sacred record of illustrious Jewish kings, Josiah is worthily ranked with Hezekiah, who "wrought good and right and truth before Jehovah, his God."[2] He stands first, moreover, in the inspired page, among all the kings of the line of David, for his unswerving loyalty to the commands of Jehovah through life.[3] "Like him," says the Book of Kings, "there was no king before him, that turned to Jehovah with all his

[1] *Gesch.*, vol. v. p. 707. [2] 2 Chron. xxxi. 20.
[3] 2 Chron. xxxiv. 2.

heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him."[1] Hezekiah may, in some points,[2] have shown a more perfect apprehension of the will of God; but Josiah was the supreme hero of absolute obedience to the letter of the Law; the most perfect type of a theocratic king, carrying out the requirements of the ancient Sacred Books to absolute fulfilment, alike in the outward extirpation of idolatry and superstition, and the legal execution of their votaries. "The remembrance of Josias," says the Son of Sirach, "is like the fragrant perfume of mingled incense, that is made by the art of the apothecary. It is sweet as honey in all mouths, and as music at a banquet of wine. He laboured with the happiest results in the conversion of his people, and rooted out the abominations of idolatry. He directed his heart unto the Lord, and held fast to godliness in the days of impiety."[3] As of Nerva, it might be said of him: "In evil times he dared to be good."[4] But his life must have been embittered by the dull inertness of the multitude, and the unscrupulous opposition of their leaders, who stooped to every art to raise popular feeling against his reforms.[5] The "remnant of Baal," moreover, standing aloof from him throughout, and powerful enough to overturn his whole work after his death,[6] were able, during his life, to prevent him carrying out his wishes even in his own house.[7] To the world he may

[1] 2 Kings xxiii. 25.

[2] 2 Kings xviii. 5.

[3] Ecclus. xlix. 1–3. *Lib. Apoc.*, Fritzsche. *Jesus Sirach*, Augusti. *Exeg. H. Buch. zu d. Apoc. des A. T.*, Fritzsche.

[4] "Temporibusque malis ausus est esse bonus." This fine sentence is based on the words of Dion Cassius, Bk. 68, *Vit. Nervæ.*

[5] Jer. viii. 8.

[6] Jer. vii. ff. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 8.

[7] Zeph. i. 8.

have appeared alike prosperous and happy, but he must, in private, have been consumed with care and annoyance. His reign might be a triumph to the world: to himself it was a tragedy.

The years after Josiah's Passover were momentous in their events in the great world. While Assyria was hopelessly sinking, and its utter extinction was evidently near, Media and Babylon were fast rising to take its place as the rulers of Western Asia. Cyaxares and Nabopolassar, their respective kings, were leagued together, to wrest as much as possible from the feeble monarch who sat on the throne of Nineveh. The Medes even penetrated to Asia Minor, and attacked the Lydians, as subjects of Assyria; but an eclipse of the sun, during a battle fought on the 30th September, B.C. 610, inclined both sides to peace. The gods seemed against a longer struggle. The combatants also were perhaps exhausted, for the war had lasted five years.[1] A marriage confirmed the cessation of strife. Astyages, the son of Cyaxares, obtained as wife the daughter of Alyattes, the Lydian king. The Medes and Babylonians, moreover, rejoiced in a union of their two dynasties by the marriage of a daughter of Cyaxares to Nabopolassar's son—soon to become famous as the Nebuchadnezzar of the Bible.

Meanwhile, Psammetichus I. of Egypt, the founder of the great twenty-sixth dynasty—the Saite—had died, after a long reign of fifty-four years,[2] and was succeeded by his son, Necho II., the grandson, on the father's side, of Necho I., who had been a vassal of the Assyrians at the close of the twenty-fifth dynasty. The new king was at once enterprising, warlike, and able. To promote trade and increase his power in war, he caused a fleet of triremes to be built, on the Grecian model, in the harbours

[1] *Herod.*, i. 74.

[2] B.C. 666–612.

on the south of the isthmus of Suez, where his dock-yards were still to be seen in the time of Herodotus.[1] Another fleet, on the Mediterranean coast, defended the north; but the two were hopelessly kept apart by the isthmus. Seti I., however, the father of Rameses II., had cut a canal across it eight hundred years before,[2] and Necho determined to imitate him. Forced labour was put in requisition to an immense extent to carry out the scheme; though, as has been always the rule in Egypt, the army of toilers was so badly cared for, that 120,000 of them are said to have died of hunger[3] or fatigue. It was an anticipation on a vast scale of one of the awful crimes of our own century, when no fewer than 10,000 men perished under Mehemet Ali, while digging the Mahmoudieh canal.[4] But Necho's undertaking was not destined to be finished; an oracle having told him he was working for the Barbarians. The priests no doubt had in their minds the Phenicians, for whose Indian trade a Suez canal would have been as great an advantage as, in our own day, it is for that of England—the Phenicia of the nineteenth century. It was to have been broad enough to let two triremes row abreast, but the honour of finishing it was left to Darius, the Persian,[5] in a future age.

Yet, if Necho's canal was a failure, the crews of Phenicians, whom he had attracted to his fleets, enabled him to

[1] *Herod.*, ii. 159.
[2] *Ebers*, in *Riehm*, p. 1370.
[3] *Herod.*, ii. 158.
[4] To some rulers, whom the world calls "great," the lives of men have been of little moment. More than 100,000 men perished in laying the foundations of St. Petersburg in 1714 and the following years, and the first Napoleon asked Metternich, "What were the lives of a million of men compared with the carrying out the schemes of a man like *him!*" Metternich's *Memoirs*, vol. i. ch. 8.
[5] *Herod.*, ii. 158.

plan a great naval expedition which speaks for his bright intelligence. Herodotus informs us,[1] that he ordered some of his vessels, manned by Phenicians, to sail from the Red Sea round Africa, returning by the Straits of Gibraltar; thinking they had only to circumnavigate Libya. But they were equal to the great task. Coasting the continent to the south, they ultimately reached and doubled the Cape of Good Hope, and got back to Egypt in safety, after a voyage of three years. Like his father Psammetichus, Necho had no foolish Egyptian prejudice against foreigners, and eagerly enlisted regiments of Greek mercenaries in his army; a fact which may in great part account for the ruinous defeat he inflicted on Josiah.[2]

In the general breaking up of the Assyrian empire, Necho fancied he had a fair opportunity of extending his empire, and of regaining part at least of the wide limits it had reached in ancient times, under Thothmes III. and Rameses II. Egypt was now strong, for Psammetichus had married the heiress of the Ethiopian royal House, and thus closed the rivalry between the native and foreign dynasties that had long torn the country in pieces, as Henry VII. ended the civil wars of England by uniting the Houses of Lancaster and York.[3]

Nineveh had not yet fallen, but it was within two or three years of its doom.[4] Nabopolassar and Cyaxares were busy in the East; and, while they were thus occupied, a bold dash might win Syria, perhaps as far as

[1] *Herod.*, iv. 42. [2] Brugsch, *Histoire d'Egypte*, vol. i. p. 252.
[3] *Ibid* vol. ii. p. 278.
[4] It was not known till within the last few years that Assyria had not fallen in 610–9 B.C. But the Bible, with minute accuracy, had written ages ago that "Necho went up against the king of *Assyria*." 2 Kings xxiii. 29.

the Euphrates, for Egypt. Necho, in the year B.C. 610, resolved on the attempt; strong in his Tyrian sailors and Greek soldiers. Unfortunately for himself and for his country, Josiah, whose territories were not in the line of the Egyptian march, thought himself forced to oppose it. Necho's army seems to have landed, in part, from his triremes, at Acre; the rest marching by the coast route, and perhaps storming Gaza on the way.[1] His course lay across the Plain of Esdraelon, but some time necessarily elapsed before the troops could advance. Meanwhile, all was bustle and preparation in Judah. Josiah was at present independent; but if Egypt conquered Syria, his position was lost. Tradition says that he adhered to his resolution to fight, in spite of the earnest entreaties of Jeremiah. Even Necho himself, indeed, tried to restrain him, but he rushed on his fate. Hearing of his advance, the Pharaoh sent envoys to assure him that the war was directed solely against his own hereditary enemy, Nineveh. "It was the will of heaven," he added, "that he should hasten on to Assyria,[2] and that Josiah should not interfere with him, lest he should be destroyed."[3] Nothing, however, could dissuade the Jewish king, now a man of thirty-nine. "He encouraged himself to fight against him,"[4] in the belief that he could conquer, and

[1] Jer. xlvii. The date of this storming of Gaza is uncertain.

[2] This is the meaning of "the house wherewith I have war." 2 Chron. xxxv. 21.

[3] Keil's explanation of 2 Chron. xxxv. 21. Pharaoh uses the general word for God, without the article to refer it to the God of Judah, and expresses only his conviction that his enterprise is favoured by heaven, which is on his side—a belief any heathen might entertain.

[4] *Sept.* Instead of "disguised himself" (2 Chron. xxxv. 22). Keil thinks "disguised himself" means, did contrary to his usual course,—that of acting only according to the ascertained will of God.

marched his forces to Esdraelon. There, where Thothmes III. and Rameses II. had triumphed over the Hittites many centuries before, the issue was soon decided. The battle was fought near Megiddo—apparently a town or village at the base of a spur of Carmel, halfway down the southern edge of the plain, and near the future Roman town of Legio, the present Ledjun.[1] Mortally wounded by the Egyptian archers, so well known from the monuments, Josiah was removed from his war chariot, the splendour of which had drawn on him the notice of the enemy, and having been laid on another kept in reserve, was driven off, dying, towards Jerusalem. But he got no farther than Rummānē—then Hadadrimmon—an ancient sanctuary of two Syrian gods, a few miles south of Megiddo, on the southern road. There he died, amidst such a wailing from the fugitives of his escort as was never forgotten in all future time. Similar outbursts of grief attended the sad procession which bore the slain hero to the capital, where the sight of his corpse threw the citizens into despair. Their hopes as a nation had perished with him. Never before had there been such a deep or universal lamentation. He was buried in a tomb he had prepared for himself, beside those of his fathers, with every manifestation of grief. Far and near the population joined in the loud demonstrations of sorrow usually restricted to professional mourners, piteous cries rising alike in town[2] and country of "O my Lord!" "O the glory of Israel!" His elegy was composed by Jeremiah, the sweetest singer of the Jewish Church after David, and was henceforth sung by the nation on the anniversary of the battle. Its tenor may perhaps be judged by the strain in which

[1] Kiepert's *Map*. Conder's proposed identification of Megiddo with a site near Beisan is evidently untenable.

[2] See an allusion to this in Jer. xxii. 18.

the calamities of Zedekiah are sung in the Book of Lamentations: "The anointed of Jehovah was taken in their pits: Of whom we said, 'Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen.'"[1] At a later time the prophet Zechariah could find no image for the unutterable lament over the death of the Messiah, but that for Josiah—"The mourning at Hadadrimmon, in the valley of Megiddon;"[2] and the "battle of the great day of God Almighty" in the Apocalypse, so transcendent in its issues, has its scene at Armageddon, or the hill of Megiddo.[3] Nor did the mass of the people forget the hero. Long after the return from Captivity, we are told that "all the singing men and singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an abiding institution in Israel; and behold they are written in the Lamentations."[4] As in Persia a yearly time of lamentation for Hossain, the grandson of Mohammed—dead now for a thousand years—is still held, all amusements being laid aside, mourning assumed, the grave visited, and orations or poems on his virtues and death, delivered to numerous assemblages;[5] so, it would appear, was it for ages among the Hebrews in the case of Josiah.

Such popular veneration, growing with years, deepened the influence of the good king's life. He was remembered above all for his zeal for the law; "his deeds, becoming one of the Hasidim,"[6] or zealots for the exact observance of the ancient sacred books of Moses. In

[1] Lam. iv. 20. [2] Zech. xii. 11. [3] Rev. xvi. 16.

[4] 2 Chron. xxxv. 25. The "Lamentations" in the Canon cannot be meant, as the death of Josiah is not spoken of in them.

[5] Rosenmüller's *A. und N. Morgenland*, vol. iii. p. 273.

[6] The word translated "goodness" in 2 Chron. xxxv. 26, was very early restricted to zealous devotion to the law. See art. *Chassidim*, in Herzog, *R. Ency.*

this respect, as we have seen, he had no rival either before or after him among the kings of Judah. Nor was the immense service he rendered to the theocracy confined to his lifetime. No sooner had the kingdom and the temple perished than its profound results appeared. The downtrodden Jew, now made intensely earnest by his misfortunes, cherished the recollection of such an ideal theocratic king as Josiah had been; carrying out literally, with all his authority, every minute requirement of the Law. His zeal dwelt in the heart of the nation as the pattern they should seek to realize, as soon as opportunity offered. Hope to rebuild the state on the model set by him, cheered and animated them during the Exile. His glorification of the Law gave a colour to the whole future history of the race. The unbending and intense devotion of Judaism to the rites and forms of the Pentateuch, after the Return, and the legalism which became supreme under Ezra and the Scribes, are to be traced to the influence of Josiah's example; not as the new critics would have it, to any contrivance of priests, either in Babylon or at a later date. Ezekiel caught his devotion to the Levitical system, from the traditions round him, on every hand, of the king whom all men so deeply lamented.[1] Judaism was, in the strictest sense, the tribute of the nation to his memory; shown in the highest form, the imitation of his example.

Josiah had reigned only thirteen years after the triumph of his great reformation; a period too short to root out the deep-seated evils of the time, or to turn the life of a whole people into a better course. His death was the ruin of the kingdom. Had the nation continued to carry out his work in his spirit, it might have revived, and, in any case, its fall would have been delayed. But the

[1] See on this subject, Nöldeke, *Bib. Lex.*, vol. iii. p. 338.

violence which had marked the religious revolution, was fatal to its permanence. The heathen party, maddened by suffering for a time the persecution they had so eagerly inflicted, under Manasseh, on the adherents of the old faith, summoned all their energy to bring about a reaction in their own favour, when Josiah, the defender of the new state of things, was gone. Violence had, indeed, been characteristic of religious changes in Israel in all its past history, and it had at last rent the nation into embittered factions, filled with inextinguishable hatred towards each other. Reconciliation was no longer possible, even in the immediate prospect of common ruin. The blood shed on both sides raised a wild frenzy of feud and division. The Ḥasidim, or orthodox party, demanded the violent suppression of their opponents, as proscribed by the Law. The heathen faction, on the other hand, while retaining the worship of Jehovah, joined with it that of a host of foreign gods. The one sought to carry out literally the commands of Deuteronomy,[1] to put to death all idolators, or at least to have no relations whatever with them; the others sanctioned a depraved morality, which the Law and even healthy natural instincts condemned.

The issue was, that the heathen party triumphed, and controlled each of the four kings yet to reign, different though they were in age, spirit, and temper. The religious settlement of Josiah was not overthrown, because things were too equally balanced to make this possible, without an uncertain struggle; but a moral chaos was introduced, which corrupted public life in every direction. Religion, in the true sense, appeared to be lost. Jeremiah's life was spent in bewailing the almost

[1] Deut. xiii. 9; xvii. 5: xx. 16. See also Exod. xxiii. 31; xxxiv. 12. Num. xxi. 2; xxxiii. 52.

universal faithlessness to Jehovah. With Ezekiel, the community is no longer "the House of Israel" but "the House of Disobedience."[1] But neither appeal nor reproaches could now reform them. A virtual anarchy reigned in the land,[2] like that which had preceded the fall of Samaria.[3] The kings were powerless to restrain the carnival of violence.[4]

In the past crisis of the nation the order of prophets played a foremost party as its faithful and wise guides and counsellors. But even this source of strength had disappeared. Its members, still, indeed, formed a class high in respect and position,[5] but to a large extent it retained its standing only from the traditions of the past. Most of the order had become keen men of the world, degrading their office into a means of support. No longer preachers of righteousness, they used their privilege of addressing the people to "speak smooth things and prophecy deceits."[6] The favour and patronage of the rich and powerful was sought, by excusing their sins, and by fawning servility; and to gain power over the multitude they even stooped to adopt the frauds of heathen magic and superstition.[7] In the sinking kingdom they were compared, by Ezekiel, to foxes in a half-ruined wall; undermining it still more and hastening its utter destruction.[8]

A few prophets, however, still fought valiantly for the truth. No taint of violence weakened their appeals.

[1] Ezek. iii. 7; Comp. Isa. xxx. 9.
[2] Ezek. xxii. 25–29; xli. 2.
[3] Hosea vi. 9; vii. 4, [4] Jer. xxxviii. 5, 14–27.
[5] 2 Kings xxiii. 2. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 22.
[6] Isa. xxx. 10. Jer. viii. 11; xiv. 13; xxiii. 17. Ezek. xiii. 10, 16.
[7] Ezek. xiii. 17–23. [8] Ezek. xiii. 5.

They had learned to trust only to spiritual influences, and lost no opportunity of proclaiming anew the eternal laws of righteousness, and exhorting their fellow-citizens to return to Jehovah. But their words fell on deaf ears and dull hearts. They were not now the great power in the state they had been. In the past, they had guided its policy in the most critical times, and had often saved it.[1] Now, however, their most earnest words were received with indifference. Israel was no longer such a kingdom as Moses had intended, listening reverently to its prophets as his ordained successors.[2] The few who still merited that name were disregarded. The loss to the nation was greater than the fall of the monarchy itself. It meant the fall of the state, for it was the repudiation of moral guidance or control. The priesthood could not supply the want; it was too corrupt. Literary culture was firmly rooted in the community, and concerned itself mainly with the sacred writings; but it was subdued to the colour of the times, and spent itself on rites and ceremonies, rather than on the great truths underlying them. At best, it was zealous for the letter, not the spirit of the law, and, as in every system where external observance is dignified with the name of religion, it fostered a hypocritical insincerity, fatal to spiritual life.

No better mirror of the times could be had than the story of Jeremiah—their greatest prophet. Pure and noble in every utterance, he spoke and counselled, warned and threatened, in vain. Never weary in the work of Jehovah, and braving all contradictions and trials to advance it, he at times sinks into despair at the wickedness around him, and the gloomy foreboding it gave of the near ruin of his country. Faithful to his

[1] *E.g.* in the case of Isaiah during the Assyrian invasion.

[2] Deut. xviii. 15. For "prophet" read "order of prophets."

great commission for half a century, and not only maintaining in his person the dignity of his order, but even increasing it, he had to feel that his influence declined as the years rolled on, while the indignities offered him deepened continually.[1]

The rout of Josiah's army had been so complete that Necho did not turn from his onward march to follow it up. His great aim was to strike a blow at the Syrian provinces of Assyria, while Cyaxares and Nabopolassar, with whom he had an understanding, attacked Nineveh itself. Striking northward, therefore, by way of Damascus, which he at once overpowered, he pressed up the broad valley between the two chains of Lebanon, and made himself master of the Assyrian province of North Syria; fixing his camp, for a time, within three months of the death of Josiah,[2] at Riblah,[3] on the direct road to the Euphrates, not far from Hamath on the Orontes.

Meanwhile, the inhabitants of Jerusalem had taken the first step towards self-protection, by electing a king. Josiah had left three sons, the children of two wives—Eliakim, the eldest, whose mother's name was Zebudah, of Rumah;[4] and Shallum and Mattaniah, the sons of

[1] See Ewald, *Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 763–772.

[2] 2 Kings xxiii, 31, 33.

[3] Riblah, the present Riblē, lay 10 to 12 hours S.S.W. of Hams (Emessa), on the river Orontes, in a great fruitful plain of the northern part of the Bekaa. It was the camping place of Nebuchadnezzar as well as of Necho (2 Kings xxv. 6, 20, 21; Jer. xxxix. 5; lii. 10), the fertility of the district supplying ample food and fodder for an army. The great caravan road from Palestine to Thapsacus and Carchemish, on the Euphrates, ran through it. Robinson, *New Bib. Researches*, pp. 708, 710, 831.

[4] Conder thinks this may have been the present Rameh, a village north of Nazareth. If so, it was a strange place to find a queen, when the Ten Tribes had so long been carried off.

Hamutal, the daughter of one Jeremiah, of Libnah.[1] He may have left the succession to the sons of the second, and best beloved wife,[2] or, it may be, the choice of one of these held out the best hopes for the country; in any case, Eliakim was passed by in favour of Shallum, who was two years younger. Honoured by popular election, he assumed the crown under the name of Jehoahaz[3]—"He whom Jehovah sustains;" having first been anointed, to give greater authority to his title.[4] Nothing is known of his character or policy beyond the hint that he did not imitate his father in reference to religion,[5] and the glance at his high spirit, if not rather at his lawlessness and violence—in the comparison of him by Ezekiel to "a young lion that had learned to catch his prey, to devour men."[6] But, as the prophet adds, "the heathen heard of him, and he was snared in their pit, and they led him off with a ring in his lips, to the land of Egypt."[7] A report of the action of the capital having reached Necho, at Riblah, in the North, such a show of independent action sealed the fate of the new king. A sufficient force was sent to Jerusalem,[8] which at

[1] Unknown.

[2] *Graetz.* If he had, he would have acted contrary to Deut. xxi. 15, which provides that the elder son be not supplanted by the son of a wife more loved.

[3] Called Shallum in Jer. xxii. 11; in reference, Bertheau thinks, to his brief reign, like that of Shallum of Samaria.

[4] After David's time, anointing was only practised in exceptional cases, to prevent a contest for the throne. Oehler, *Theol. d. A. T.*, vol. ii. p. 26.

[5] 2 Kings xxiii. 32.

[6] Ezek. xix. 3.

[7] The word "chains" in Ezek. xix. 3, is the same as in Isa. xxxvii. 29, and means the ring in the nose by which wild beasts were led.

[8] Herodotus (ii. 159, iii. 5), speaks of Necho having taken Kadytis, the greatest city of Palestine, and the identification of

once yielded, and Jehoahaz was carried off to the Egyptian camp; Eliakim, his elder brother, being appointed king in his stead. It was, in some respects, a repetition of the fate of Hosea, the last king of Samaria.[1] Passing on in the conqueror's train towards the Euphrates, or ignominiously sent to the Nile at once, Egypt was henceforth his place of permanent exile. How long he lived is not known, but he was a captive till his death. Such a fate was regarded as worse than that of his father at Megiddo. He was the first king of Judah that died in exile. "Weep not for the dead," said Jeremiah, "neither bewail him; but weep sore for him that goeth away; for he shall return no more, nor see his native country."[2] The new king ascended the throne under the name of Jehoiakim—"He whom Jehovah has set up;" having gladly consented to pay tribute to Necho, and become his pliant vassal. Marching on to the East, the Pharaoh successfully overran Syria, to the banks of the Euphrates, and Nineveh was thus stripped of all its territory between that river and Egypt. Nabopolassar, of Babylon, and Cyaxares, the Mede, were meanwhile pressing it to the uttermost, and left the Egyptian conqueror, for the time, in quiet possession of his new dominions. The siege of the great city was already at hand. Little more than two years remained till its fall. The prophecies of its doom were hastening to their fulfilment.

this place with Jerusalem, by Böttcher, *Aehrenlese*, vol. ii. p. 118, seems complete.

[1] Vol. iv. p. 238. [2] Jer. xxii. 10.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### FIRST YEARS OF JEHOIAKIM.

JEHOIAKIM, a young man of twenty-five when his reign commenced, showed himself an unworthy son of his great father. Necho had laid a heavy yearly tribute on the little kingdom—100 talents of silver, and one talent of gold[1]—equal, nominally, to from £80,000 to £90,000,[2] but of vastly greater value in those early times than that sum would be now. Harsh and unfeeling, the new king took care to secure his throne by extorting this from his subjects; his military force being apparently used to wring payment of the taxes imposed to raise it, and a huge revenue besides.[3] No pity touched his heart; absorbing self indulgence, pride, and despotic violence were his characteristics. Aspiring to be a great king, he lavished expense not only on royal state, but on costly buildings; adorning Jerusalem, as it afterwards seemed, before its impending ruin, as sacrifices were garlanded when about to be led to the altar. A great palace was built by forced labour,[4] with spacious

[1] The Sept. has 100 talents of gold, but this is evidently an error.

[2] Thenius says £77,000; Keil, £90,000.

[3] So *Thenius* and *Graetz*.

[4] Jer. xxii. 12.

halls roofed with cedar from Lebanon, lighted by many windows, and set off with vermilion.[1] Other notable buildings, also, rose in the city; nor is it without ground that he is thought to have finished the stronghold on Ophel, begun by Manasseh,[2] and known as "his house, in the garden of Uzzah," adjoining the fortress.[3] He affected, in truth, to imitate the greatest of his forefathers. But, unlike them, he used not only the forced toil of Canaanites; free citizens and peasants were enslaved, and worked to the death to carry out his will. "He built his city with blood, and his citadel with iniquity." Defiant in his ungodliness, to the length of contemptuously burning a sacred prophetic roll,[4] he shrank from no crime to silence the prophets. Had he not been controlled, he would have put Jeremiah to death, and one prophet at least, Urijah, of the ancient town of Kirjathjearim, "the town in the woods," he actually slew. The martyr had fled to Egypt, but the king's father-in-law was sent off with an armed band, to bring him back, and having succeeded, he was forthwith beheaded, and his body refused burial in the tombs of the prophets; being "cast into the graves of the common people" as a last indignity.[5]

Things were every way dark for Judah. The reign of Josiah had raised hopes of a prosperous future, and the Book of the Law, so strangely recovered, had seemed to the multitude a charm to secure Divine favour. But Josiah had fallen in battle. The flower of the army had perished with him. His youngest son pined in chains in a foreign dungeon. The covenant they had made with Jehovah had brought no such magic blessing as had been

[1] Jer. xxii. 13, 14; perhaps also Hab. ii. 9–14.
[2] 2 Kings xxi. 18.
[3] *Thenius.*
[4] Jer. xxxvi. 23.
[5] Jer. xxvi. 21.

superstitiously dreamed. It was easy for the powerful heathen party to represent that the nation would have fared better had it not cast away the gods of Manasseh's time.[1] "We shall burn incense," said the people, "and pour out drink offerings to the queen of heaven,[2] as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem; for then we had plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil."[3]

A reaction in favour of heathenism began, therefore, at once. Altars were built once more on every hill, and under every green tree. There were, again, as many gods in Judah as there were towns.[4] An Asherah was raised at the north gate of the temple enclosure—"the gate of the altar." In the dark chambers of the substructures of the temple area the sacred animals of Egypt were worshipped, amidst clouds of incense, and at the north gate of the temple there was a wailing place, where women sat crying aloud for the loss of the Phenician god Tammuz, or Adonis.[5] Nor was even this the worst. In the most sacred spot of the temple itself,[6] in the inner court, between the porch of the Holy Place and the great altar standing before it, the spot where in Joel's day the priests in black robes, during the great fast, had implored with loud cries that Jehovah would spare His people, Ezekiel saw a group of men who must,

[1] Jer. xliv. 17, 18.

[2] Graetz thinks that Neïth, the Egyptian goddess, is meant by the Queen of heaven. She was doubtless called so—Brugsch, *Geog. Inschrift. Altägyp. Denkmäler*, vol. i. p. 245; but it was certainly the Assyrian queen of heaven that was worshipped in Judah.

[3] Jer. xliv. 17.

[4] Jer. xi. 13.

[5] Ezek. viii. 3, 10, 11, 14.

[6] Joel ii. 17.

from the place, have been priests,[1] standing with their backs to the temple,[2] and their faces to the East, worshipping the rising sun.[3] Idols of gold and silver, wood and stone, were again set up in private houses; even the obscene symbols of Phenician idolatry among others.[4] The Valley of Hinnom again resounded with the wails, and savage drumbeating, and dissonant trumpet blasts, of Moloch worship, and parents once more sought to propitiate the grisly idol by offering to it their eldest, often their only son.[5]

The dissolution of morals kept pace with the religious declension. Impurity; adultery; oppression of foreigners, of widows, and of orphans; venality in the judges; falsehood, dishonesty, usury; remorselessness towards helpless debtors; robbery, and murder, in all classes alike, hastened the ruin of the country.[6] Even the ties of relationship were disregarded. "Every man had to take

[1] Smend, whose theory of growing zeal among the priests during the Exile will not allow him to admit that they belonged to the order, tries to show that laymen, before the Exile, had admission to the space between the door of the Holy Place and the altar. But his examples are only those of kings—Solomon, Hezekiah, and Josiah—or of the force brought in for a special occasion, the overthrow of Athaliah, by Jehoiada. Such instances are simply delusive. The kings always claimed a priestly right, and enjoyed it till Uzziah's day. Indeed, Hezekiah and Josiah, still later, exercised it without challenge.

[2] 2 Chron. xxix. 6.

[3] Ezek. viii. 16. Sunrise was sacred to the sun worshippers. *Herod.*, iii. 85. The Essenes in later times would not speak a word about ordinary matters before sunrise, but recited prayers. Jos., *Bell. Jud.*, II. viii. 5.

[4] Ezek. xvi. 17, "images of men"—lit., "of a male."

[5] Jer. vii. 31; xix. 5. See Isa. lvii. 5.

[6] Jer. v. 7, 8; vi. 9; ix. 1–7. Ezek. xvi. 8 ff.; xxii. 25.

heed of his neighbour, and suspect his brother."[1] The priesthood were largely tainted by the spirit of the time. There was no longer need to bring in foreign priests to serve the idols, and the prophets were, as a class, equally degenerate.

But while moral as well as political night were thus settling over the community at large, the sacred light of religion still lingered in a small circle—the forlorn hope of the old faith of Israel. Some of those who had done good service in the reign of Josiah had passed away, but their children had taken their places. In this band Jeremiah, who was related to its principal members, was the central figure. The nephew of Shallum—husband of the prophetess Huldah—and cousin of Hanameel, Shallum's son, he found in both the truest friendship. Baruch, his inseparable companion, was the grandson of Maaseiah; and Ahikam and Gedaliah—whose protection alone saved his life—were the son and grandson of Shaphan, the secretary of king Josiah.

Other prophets, such as Habakkuk and Urijah, with Ezekiel, a few years later, nobly vindicated their office amidst the hatred and persecution it brought in such times. But no one, so far as we know, bore so dauntless and persistent a testimony against the sins of his countrymen as Jeremiah. The relapse into heathenism under Jehoiakim roused him to the utmost. Timid, shrinking, and sensitive by nature; love of his country, and enthusiasm for Jehovah, gave him a courage and constancy which no dangers appalled. He might in his bosom feel the humility of a child, and think himself unable to speak in public;[2] he might wish that his head were waters, and his eyes a fountain of tears, that he might weep day and

[1] Ezek. xxii. 7. Jer. ix. 4; xii. 6. [2] Jer. i. 6.

night for the Daughter of his People.[1] He might sigh for a "lodge in the wilderness," to escape from the sin around him;[2] but all this passed away when he appeared before his fellow-citizens. In the presence of king, or prince, or priest, or populace, he was, as God had predicted,[3] defiant as a fortified town, and immovable as a pillar of iron, or walls of brass. Fearless and undismayed, he "girt up his loins, and arose and spoke"[4] to all classes and ranks, from day to day, whenever opportunity offered,[5] warning and rebuking with noble directness and plainness. Such fidelity, amidst a generation so fallen, bore its natural fruit in the hatred of those whose sins were assailed. The nobles were furious at his exposure of their lawless violence, and cold self-indulgence. The people at large resented indignantly his warnings that their superstitious trust in the temple as an inviolable safeguard from public danger, was mere self-deception;[6] that their sacrifices were not accepted by God; that their glory as the chosen people would not save them; that they, the circumcised, would share the same fate for their sins, as the uncircumcised heathen; that the temple itself would be destroyed, as that of Shiloh had been; and that Jerusalem would be reduced to ruins, and they themselves led away as slaves to a foreign land. But he

[1] Jer. ix. 1. Jerusalem is meant. [2] Jer. ix. 2. [3] Jer. i. 18.
[4] Jer. i. 17, 18; xiii. 13. [5] Jer. xxv. 3; xxxv. 15.

[6] At Chunar, near Benares, in India, a stone is shown on which it is believed "the Almighty is seated, personally, though invisibly, for nine hours every day. On this account the sepoys think that Chunar can never be taken by an enemy, during these hours." Heber's *Journal*, vol. i. p. 409. This seems the exact counterpart of the notion cherished by the ancient Jews, from Jehovah dwelling in their midst, between the cherubim. The temple could not, they supposed, be taken, with such a guardian.

was hated, most of all, by the priests and prophets, as one who, while belonging to both orders, spoke ill of the members of each. Class feeling, than which nothing is so bitter, was roused, in both, to the deadliest intensity against him.[1] Absolute loneliness amidst his fellows; misappreciation of his motives; fierce accusation of sentiments which he abhorred; the consciousness that, while his heart was breaking for love of his country, he was denounced as a traitor by those who were themselves betraying the nation, darkened his life. Sad at soul, he had no desire for any of the pleasures of other men. Unlike priests or prophets as a rule, he remained unmarried,[2] and withheld himself from meetings of his fellows, whether for mourning or feasting.[3] The hand of God seemed against him all the day. He felt as if he were a mark for His arrows. He had been led into darkness, and was like one that lived in the gloomy tombs of the long dead.[4] At times it appeared as if God had deceived him,[5] and in his desolation of soul, he lamented that he had ever been born.[6] His life seemed an utter failure. His words came back to him like an empty sound. No man regarded them.

But though for the time, and indeed to the close of his life, "he was in derision all the day long and mocked by every one," he had his reward in the veneration of later generations, and the profound influence of his word through all ages. To his contemporaries he seemed only to denounce and condemn all they most cherished, but he was, in reality, under Divine guidance, leading the way to a higher spirituality and a nobler development of religion. If he predicted that the day would come when the loss of the Ark would no longer be regretted; if he treated

[1] Jer. xi. 19–21. [2] Jer. xvi. 2. [3] Jer. xvi. 8.
[4] Lam. iii. 2, 6, 12. [5] Jer. xx. 7. [6] Jer. xx. 14–18.

even the temple as a temporary glory soon to perish;[1] if he trusted so little to the official Reformation of Josiah, as to pass it over in silence; it was because he realized that the heart alone is the seat of true religion, and that the most sacred objects are only sources of evil, if they arrest the devotion that should centre on God. He was emphatically a preacher of righteousness. The newly discovered Law, in its moral precepts, was urged in all his discourses, as the Divine standard. Even before his day, lofty and spiritual conceptions of God and of human duty had been proclaimed by prophets and psalmists. It had been impressed on the nation that rites and offerings were subordinate in the eyes of God to a holy life and the incense of the heart. Joel had told his contemporaries to rend their hearts, and not their garments.[2] Hosea had declared that "God desired mercy, and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of Himself more than burnt offerings."[3] Micah had loudly insisted that what Jehovah required of man, was not thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his God.[4] "Circumcise your heart" cried Jeremiah;[5] "amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God."[6] In all this, there was only the echo of the teaching of Deuteronomy and of the Law at large—for there also "circumcision of the heart" was demanded, and its supreme love claimed for Jehovah.[7] But it was reserved for Jeremiah to foresee a day in which the Ceremonial Law would finally pass away, and a new spiritual covenant take the place of that of Moses. Under the Messiah, "Jehovah our Righteous-

[1] Jer. iii. 16; vii. 4. [2] Joel ii. 13.
[3] Hosea vi. 6. [4] Micah vi. 6.
[5] Jer. iv. 4, see the significance in vii. 4; ix. 24.
[6] Jer. xxvi. 13. [7] Deut. x. 12–16; xxx. 6; iv. 15; x. 12.

ness,"[1] "The Righteous Branch," "the King" who should "reign and prosper, and execute judgment and justice on the earth," another covenant than that of Sinai would be introduced. "God would put His law in their inward parts, and write it, not on stone, but in their hearts, and would be their God and they should be His people."[2] With such a vision of the ultimate triumph of righteousness, Jeremiah, amidst all his sorrows, had the abiding consolation, that, little as men thought it, he was the divinely appointed herald of the true Kingdom of God among men.

The incidents recorded of Jehoiakim's reign are few, but the increased prophetic activity of Jeremiah during its course brings the people and the time very closely before us. The first of his discourses after the death of Josiah seems to be that which opens with the fourteenth chapter, and though in its present form it may comprise addresses originally independent, the prophet himself having put them together at a later period,[3] nothing could more vividly illustrate the state of things in these darkening years.

Misfortunes, it is said, never come singly. Josiah's death had been followed by a succession of dry seasons,[4] till the land was parched, and the sufferings of the population had become intense. The failure of the entreaties of the prophet for them, was the occasion of the present address.

[1] Jer. xxiii. 6; xxxiii. 15, 16.

[2] Jer. xxxi. 33.

[3] Jer. xxx.

[4] In Jer. xiv. 1, "dearth" should be "dearths." Drought was one of the punishments threatened by the Law, for national sin. Lev. xxvi. 19. Deut. xi. 17; xxviii. 23. It had often been threatened by the prophets. Jer. iii. 3; xii. 4; xxiii. 10. Hag. i. 10 ff.

"Judah mourns," says he;[1] "the people of her towns[2] are sore troubled; they lie in black on the earth, in their grief; the wailing cry of Jerusalem rises to heaven? Her chief men send their little ones for water; they come to the cisterns and find none. They return ashamed and confounded, with their vessels empty; their heads covered, in deepest sorrow.[3] The tillers of the ground are dismayed, because there has been no rain on the earth; the field workers are ashamed; they cover their heads. For the very hind, so tender in her care for her offspring,[4] calves in the field, and forsakes her fawn, because there is no grass, and the wild asses stand on the tops of the bare hills; gasping for air with distended nostrils, like dragons,[5] for even on the height there is no breath of air, so fierce is the heat! their keen eyesight fails them through want of any green thing for food!"

Moved by such wide suffering, the prophet entreats God on behalf of the nation, but his prayers are not heard.

Though our iniquities witness against us,[6] O Jehovah, yet help us for Thy name's sake, for thou art "Jehovah, merciful and gracious;"[7] and for thine honour before the heathen—for we are thy people, and our transgressions are many; we have sinned against Thee. Thy name is our only plea: we have no claims of our own to urge. Thou Hope of Israel; his Saviour in the time

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[1] Jer. xiv. 1-6.

[2] Lit., "gates;" the place of public assembly is put for those who gather in it.

[3] 2 Sam. xv. 30; xix. 5. The head covered as if there was no longer a desire to see or to be seen.

[4] The care of hinds for their young is often noticed by ancient writers. Aristotle tells how they bring them to a safe retreat which has only one approach; Pliny, how they teach them to flee at the appearance of danger; and Solinus, how they carefully hide them. *Bochart*, Part I. bk. iii., chap. 17.

[5] Hitzig thinks crocodiles, whales, or dolphins are intended by "dragons"; Ewald, any hard breathing, panting animals, with widely opened mouths. Keil and Naegelsbach, jackals—open-mouthed.

[6] Jer. xiv. 6-9.

[7] Josh. vii. 7-9; Ps. lxxix. 9; cvi. 8. Isa. xlviii. 9.

of trouble, why shouldst Thou be like a stranger in the land, passing through it, as a land not his own, and like a wayfarer who pitches[1] his tent to tarry for the night, and has no interest in it? Why shouldst Thou be like a man confounded and at a loss what to do; like a mighty man who can do nothing to help; and yet Thou art in our midst, and we are called by Thy name; O leave us not!

But God answers:

Thus says Jehovah to this people.[2] They have indeed loved to wander; they have not kept back their feet; and so Jehovah accepts them not:[3] He will remember their iniquity and visit their sins. And Jehovah said to me, Pray not for this people for their good. Though they fast, I will not hear their cry; though they offer up burnt sacrifices and the Minchah,[4] I have no pleasure in them, but will consume them by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence.[5]

Jeremiah then makes a fresh appeal, and receives a second reply.

Then said I,[6] Alas, Lord Jehovah, behold the false prophets say to my people in Thy name—"Ye shall *not* see the sword, ye will have no famine, but I (Jehovah) shall surely give you peace in this place."

Then Jehovah said to me,[7] "The false prophets prophesy lies in My name; I have neither sent them, nor commissioned them, nor spoken to them at all. They prophesy to you a pretended vision and lying divination, and the false responses and deceit of their own heart!" Therefore thus say I, Jehovah, respecting the

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[1] Lit., "stretches."

[2] Jer. xiv. 10-12.

[3] A quotation, to end of the verse, from Hosea viii. 13. "Accepts them not," lit., "has no pleasure in them."

[4] An offering consisting of flour, meal or cakes, with oil and frankincense. It was burned on the altar, either alone, or with the bloody sacrifice. Lev. ii. 1-4; v. 6.

[5] See Lev. xxvi. 25, 26.

[6] Jer. xiv. 13.

[7] Jer. xiv. 14-16.

prophets that prophesy in My name, though I have not sent them, and say to you "Sword and Famine will *not* be in this land"—these very prophets shall die by the sword and famine. And the corpses of the people to whom they prophesy will be thrown out on the streets of Jerusalem, through famine and the sword, and no one will bury either them, their wives, their sons, or their daughters, for I will pour out the punishment of their wickedness upon them. Say all this unto them!

Such a reply from God fills the soul of Jeremiah with the profoundest sorrow.

Mine eyes[1] flow down with tears, night and day, without ceasing! For the virgin daughter[2] of my people has received a terrible blow; she is grievously hurt. If I go out to the open country, there lie men slain with the sword; if I come into the city, behold there is the pestilence that comes after famine? And even the prophet and the priest wander round, begging, and know not whither to go! Hast Thou, then, utterly rejected Judah? Is Thy soul tired of Zion? Why hast Thou smitten us, so that there is no healing for us? We look for good and no good comes to us; for a time of healing, and behold there is only terror! We acknowledge, O Jehovah, our wickedness—the iniquity of our fathers; for we have sinned against Thee; Yet, cast us not off, for Thy name's sake; do not dishonour this city Jerusalem, the Throne of Thy glory.[3] Call to remembrance, break not Thy covenant with us! Is there among the idols[4] of the nations any one that can bring the rain we so much need? Or can the skies of themselves give showers? Is it not Thou, our God, O Jehovah, who alone canst do this, and on whom only, therefore, we should wait; for Thou hast ordered all these things.

But, once again, Jehovah utterly rejects all intreaty on behalf of Judah.

[1] Jer. xiv. 17-22.
[2] Jerusalem.
[3] Through having the temple.
[4] Lit., "vanities," primarily "breaths," then "emptinesses," "things of no worth."

But Jehovah answered and said; [1] If both Moses and Samuel,[1] the greatest men of the Theocracy, stood pleading, before Me, My soul could not be toward this people. Send them away from before My face, with their offerings and prayers, and let them leave My temple, where they have gathered to supplicate My favour.[3] And when they say to you, "Where shall we go?" Say to them—Thus has Jehovah told me to say to you. Let him who is to die, go forth to his death! him who is to fall by the sword, to the sword! him who is to fall by famine, to famine! and him who is to die in captivity, to captivity! I appoint four destroyers,[4] says Jehovah: The sword to slay, the dogs to tear and fight over the corpse; [5] the birds of the air, and the beasts of the earth, to devour and destroy. And I give them up to be ill treated [6] among all the kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, for what he did in Jerusalem. For who who will have pity on thee, O Jerusalem; who will show sympathy for thee; who will move a foot to ask how it fares with thee? Thou hast rejected Me, says Jehovah, turning thy back to Me; and therefore I will stretch out My hand against thee, and destroy thee: I am weary of relenting. I will scatter them in the gates of all the towns of the land as with a broad winnowing shovel, as men scatter the chaff on the open-air hill threshing floors; I will bereave thee of thy children; I will destroy[7] My people; they have not turned back from their evil ways! Their widows will be more in number before Me, when I destroy their husbands, than the sands of the seas; I will bring on them, against the mothers [8] of the young warriors,[9] a spoiler, at noon, when they least expect

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[1] Jer. xv. 1-9.

[2] See Exod. xvii. 11; xxxii. 11-14. Num. xiv. 13-20. 1 Sam. vii. 9; xii. 23. Ps. xcix. 6.

[3] Jer. xiv. 12.

[4] Lit., "kinds."

[5] Lit., "to drag around."

[6] "I will make them a horror or shuddering," Hitzig, Graf, Sachs, Naegelsbach, Fürst, Eichhorn; "a sport of the wind," Ewald; "an object of derision," De Wette. As in the text, Keil, Gesenius, Knobel, Mühlau and Volck. See Deut. xxviii. 25, where this threat is made in the same words.

[7] The verbs are all in the perfect, expressing God's purpose.

[8] Lit., "mother."

[9] Lit., "the young man."

him; I will cause anguish and mortal terror to fall on them suddenly. She that has borne seven sons will droop, and breathe out her soul, for her sons have fallen and she has no one to protect her; her sun will go down while it is yet day; she will be put to shame and confusion. As to the remnant of the people left, I will give them to the sword before their enemies, saith Jehovah.

Such an awful answer from God overpowers the prophet. To announce it will make all men his enemies. He wishes his mother had never borne him!

Woe is me,[1] my mother, that thou hast borne me, to be a man of strife and contention with all the land, by having to deliver such a terrible message! I have neither lent money nor borrowed it,[2] yet all curse me.

But now comes the comforting reply of Jehovah.

Verily,[3] thy trouble will turn to thy good;[4] verily I will cause thy enemies[5] to come as suppliants to thee in the time of evil and of need.[6] Can one break northern iron and bronze? As little canst thou hope that the power of the Chaldean kingdom, the northern conqueror, will be broken. Thy substance and thy treasures will I freely[7] give to it for booty, in all thy borders, on account of thy sins. And I will make thee serve thine enemy in a land which thou knowest not; for a fire is kindled in My anger,[8] which shall burn against thee!

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[1] Jer. xv. 10.

[2] Deut. xxiii. 10. Ps. xv. 5.

[3] Jer. xv. 11–14.

[4] This is Hitzig's rendering. Gesenius has, "I will afflict thee for thy good." So Naegelsbach. Others, "I have strengthened thee for good." Still others, "Thy losing is for good,"—a slightly different reading in the Hebrew causing these variations. The sense evidently is, "In the troublous times to come thou shalt surely be delivered."

[5] Lit., "the enemy."

[6] Fulfilled, chap. xxi. 1, 2; xxxvii. 3; xlii. 2.

[7] "Without price."

[8] Quoted from Deut. xxxii. 22.

The prophet, however, is oppressed by the thought of the persecution he suffers, and turns on his enemies, appealing to God for their punishment.

O Jehovah, Thou knowest![1] Remember me and look upon me,[2] and revenge me on my persecutors. In Thy longsuffering towards them take me not away; let them not destroy me. Consider that it is for Thy sake I suffer reproach. Thy words came to me,[3] and I, as it were, devoured them. Thy words were the joy and rejoicing of my heart, for I bear Thy name, O Jehovah of Hosts. I did not sit in the assembly of the rejoicing, nor make glad with them: I sat alone, far from all pleasure, because Thy hand was upon me. For Thou hast filled me with Thy wrath. Why is my suffering continual? why is my wound incurable? why will it not heal? Wilt Thou be indeed like a deceitful brook to me, a stream that dries up and is not abiding?

Jehovah answers, rebuking the prophet's impatience.

Then answered Jehovah thus:[4] If thou returnest to Me and givest up these doubts and reproaches, I will take[5] thee back as My servant, to stand before Me, and if thou bringest forth in thy heart good, instead of unworthy, thoughts of Me, thou shalt be My mouth,[6] and thy enemies will turn to thee, asking thy prayers; not thou go to them, seeking help in thy need. And I will make thee a strong brazen wall to this people, so that though they fight against thee they shall not prevail. For I shall be with thee, to save thee and to deliver thee, says Jehovah. And I will save thee from the hand of the wicked and deliver thee from the fist of the violent.

Similar communications were made by God to the prophet at different times. One opens by directing him how to act in his personal relations, in view of the approaching ruin of his country. He is not to marry, for the children and parents of Jerusalem are doomed

[1] Jer. xv. 15-18.
[2] Lit., "visit me."
[3] Lit., "were found."
[4] Jer. xv. 19-21.
[5] Lit., "bring."
[6] Exod. iv. 16.

to a wretched death; he is not to mourn, for God will presently punish without showing mercy; and he is not to rejoice with his friends, for all joy will soon be taken away from the land.

The word of Jehovah[1] came to me, another time, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife, or have either sons or daughters in this place.[2] For thus says Jehovah respecting the sons and the daughters who shall be born here, and respecting their mothers who bear them, and respecting their fathers that begat them in this land. They shall die grievous deaths;[3] there will be no smiting of the breast or wailing for them,[4] nor shall they even be buried, but they shall become manure on the face of the land. They shall be consumed by the sword and by hunger, and their corpses shall be food to the birds of the air, and the beasts of the earth.

Jehovah says, further: Enter not a house where they are lifting up the wail, or holding a funeral feast;[5] join not in the lament, nor show sympathy; for I have taken away My blessing from this people, says Jehovah, My grace and My pity. Both

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[1] Jer. xvi. 1-9.

[2] He must have been living in Jerusalem at this time.

[3] Lit., "deaths of diseases."

[4] "Fifteen to twenty women, clad in black, with a dark coloured cloth over their heads, assemble before the door of the dead person. A hand-drum is beaten by one of them, and the others move round in a circle to the time of the beating, singing aloud the praises of the dead man or woman, and striking their hands together twenty or thirty times a minute, before their face, letting their arms forthwith fall to their full length. One or other, moreover, each moment shrieks aloud with a shrill piercing cry. The lamentations last seven days, during which the nearest female relatives of the dead visit the grave, attended by some of the mourning women, who utter these piercing shrieks from time to time, as they go through the streets to the place of burial."—Rosenmüller's *A. und N. Morgenland*, vol. iv. p. 274.

[5] The word for "mourning" is translated "banquet," in Amos vi. 7.

great and small[1] shall die in this land, and remain unburied, and no one will raise the wail for them,[2] or cut themselves for them, or shave their heads for them,[3] nor will they break bread to any one while he mourns, to comfort him in his sorrow for the dead, nor reach him the cup of consolation, even for his own father or mother.[4] And do not go into the house of feasting, to sit with the company, eating and drinking. For thus has Jehovah, the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, spoken: Behold, I will silence, in this place, before your eyes, and in your lifetime, the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride.[5]

The cause of this terrible judgment is repeated.

And when thou tellest people all these words,[6] and they say to thee: Why has Jehovah spoken all this great evil against us? and what is our sin, or our iniquity that we have committed against our God? Say to them, Because your fathers have forsaken Me, and gone after other gods, and served and worshipped

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[1] Old and young.

[2] No one dared to lament those who died under the wrath of an earthly king; so, now, with those who die through the wrath of the King above.

[3] Two signs of mourning common among ancient nations, but prohibited to Israel. Lev. xix. 28. Deut. xiv. 1.

[4] Breaking bread and drinking the cup of consolation, refers to the practice of sending bread and wine to the relations of a dead person, to comfort them in their sorrow.

[5] "On the occasion of a marriage the women go in a procession from the house of the bridegroom to fetch the bride, who is brought amidst the cries of the women, and in the company of her mother and other female relations. The procession is always by day, and generally about three in the afternoon. Verses suited to the occasion are sung as an epithalamium, by women hired for the purpose, or by female slaves; all the women raising a piercing cry of joy at the end of each verse, as a chorus. A hired band also plays before the procession, and such of the women in it as have good voices join loudly in the songs."—Russell's *Aleppo*, vol. i. p. 406.

[6] Jer. xvi. 10–13.

them, and have forsaken Me, and have not kept My law,[1] and *you* have done worse than your fathers; for, behold, ye walk, every one after the stubbornness of your evil heart, and will not give heed to Me: For this, I will hurl you out of this land, unto the land which you do not know, and your fathers knew not; there, ye may serve other gods, day and night, for I will show you no favour!

But if the punishment is to be terrible, the Divine mercy, still unexhausted, will ultimately vouchsafe a wondrous deliverance.

Yet, behold, a time will come,[2] says Jehovah, when they will no longer swear "By the life of Jehovah who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt," but "By the life of Jehovah who brought the sons of Israel from the land of the North, and from all the lands to which He had driven them." For I will bring them back to the land which I gave to their fathers.

But though the Divine grace will be shown in the end, the nation must, meanwhile, be carried away in successive deportations, to foreign lands.

Behold,[3] I will send for many fishers, says Jehovah, and they will fish[4] them out, and, afterwards, I will send for many hunters, and they will hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and from the clefts of the rocks.[5] For My eyes are upon all their ways: they are not hid from Me, and their iniquity is not hid from My eyes. And I will thus requite their twofold sin[6] with a twofold punishment, the horrors of war and the pains of captivity, before I restore them to their land. Because they defiled My land with their mock gods, foul as dead carcases,[7] and filled My inheritance with their loathsome idols.

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[1] Jeremiah takes for granted that their fathers had the Law.

[2] Jer. xvi. 14-16.

[3] Jer. xvi. 16-18.

[4] See Amos iv. 2.

[5] Isaiah vii. 19.

[6] See Jer. ii. 13.

[7] "Carcases" may mean the sacrifices, clean or unclean, offered to idols, or the idols themselves, which, alike, polluted any one who touched them, as a dead body did. But it seems better to think of the idols as mere dead forms, in opposition to the living God.

The prophet breaks out into an expression of his conviction that the justice of God, thus shown, will increase the Divine glory.

O Jehovah, my strength, and my fortress,[1] and my refuge in the day of adversity, to Thee will the nations come from the ends of the earth, and say, "Our fathers inherited only false and worthless gods, in whom no help is to be found. Shall man make to himself gods, which are yet no gods?"

Jehovah answers:

Because of this, behold,[2] I will this time, by My awful judgments, cause men to acknowledge Me; to acknowledge My hand and My might, and to acknowledge that My name is Jehovah. The sin of Judah[3] is graved with an iron tool,[4] and cut with a diamond point,[5] which alone are hard enough, on the flinty tablet of your heart, and on the horns of your altars. Their children will remember with horror the altars of their fathers, and their Asherahs, under the green trees, on the high hills.[6] O Thou

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[1] Jer. xvi. 19, 20. [2] Jer. xvi. 21. [3] Jer. xvii. 1-4.

[4] Job xix. 24.

[5] The ancients were well acquainted with the cutting powers of the diamond, and set it in iron, as is now done for the use of glaziers. *Sp. Comm.*, quoting Pliny, *Hist. Nat.*, xxxvii. 15. The Hebrew word for diamond means primarily, a thorn, or a finger-nail. See art. *Edelsteine*, *Bib. Lex.* It seems, however, as if Assyria threw light on this passage. The word for "tablet" is that which is used for the clay tablets of Nineveh, and the pen, of course, would thus be the metal style employed for impressing characters on them. "The point of a diamond" is very frequently an expression suggested by the fact that the poor made marks with their nails on these tablets, in place of signing them: the word meaning, as stated above, both nail and diamond.

[6] This difficult passage may be variously rendered. Perhaps it means, that their altars remind men of child sacrifices; the trees on the hills, of Asherahs; or, that they love their altars and their groves as passionately as they love their children.

Jerusalem, My mountain on the richly bedewed field,[1] thy substance and thy treasures will I give to the spoil, thy heights around thee in all thy borders, because of thy sin.[2] And thou, even thou, by thine own fault, wilt be torn away from thine heritage that I gave thee, and I will cause thee to serve thine enemies in the land which thou knowest not. For ye have kindled the fire of My wrath and it will burn for ever.

The verses that follow seem to have been a separate discourse, occasioned by the public and private wickedness around him; the harsh treatment he himself received weighing heavily on his mind.

Thus says Jehovah,[3] Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from Jehovah. He shall be like a poor man lost[4] in the barren desert. He does not see good when it comes, but inhabits the parched places in the wilderness; a salt and uninhabited land. But blessed is the man who trusts in Jehovah, and whose confidence Jehovah is. He shall be as a tree planted by the waters;[5] it stretches out its roots to the stream, and will not fear when the heat comes; its leaves will be green, and in the year of drought it will not be troubled, or cease to bear fruit.[6]

The heart is deceitful above all things, It is fatally diseased.[7] Who can know it?

I, Jehovah, search the heart and try the reins, to give every man according to his way; according to the fruit of his deeds.

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[1] *Eichhorn.* See Jer. xviii. 14; xxi. 13.

[2] Hitzig thinks the hill district round Jerusalem is to be given up as a *sin-offering*, to be utterly destroyed by the enemy.

[3] Jer. xvii. 5-11.

[4] Not "heath," as in A.V. There is no true heath in Palestine south of the lower Lebanon. The mistake has risen from the Arabic word 'Azar, the dwarf juniper, being similar in sound to that used in our text. Chap. xlviii. 6, where "heath" again occurs, is to be translated as above. The word means "stripped," "naked," hence "homeless," "lost," "destitute."

[5] The rivulets of irrigation in Eastern gardens.

[6] The same image as in Psalm i.

[7] The word is translated in chap. xv. 18; xxx. 12, "incurable."

As the partridge is said to sit[1] on eggs which she has not laid, and to hatch them, only to see the young ere long leave her,[2] so is he who gets riches and not by right. He will leave them in the midst of his days,[3] and at his end will be a fool.

These reflections sustain the prophet in his personal

A "Watered Garden."

troubles, and turning his thoughts to Jehovah, his strength and refuge, he addresses the temple as His dwelling.

[1] Or, heaps up (under it).

[2] This popular fancy of Jeremiah's day is illustrated by Eichhorn from a hen hatching duck's eggs. The ducklings follow their own nature and very soon leave the foster mother.

[3] Eichhorn reads, "They will leave him," etc. So the Sept.

Thou Throne of Glory,[1] exalted from of old; thou place of Our Sanctuary! Jehovah, Thou hope of Israel, all that forsake Thee shall be put to shame! They that turn from Thee shall be written in the dust,[2] not in the rock; because they have forsaken Jehovah, the fountain of living waters.[3]

Heal me! Jehovah, and I shall be healed; help me, and I shall be helped, for Thou art the object of my praise! Behold, they say to me, "Where is the word of Jehovah? Is it still to be fulfilled?" I have never drawn back from being a leader,[4] following Thee, nor have I wished for the coming of the woful day I had to predict; Thou knowest. That which came out of my lips lay always open before Thee. Be not a terror to me; Thou art my refuge in the day of evil. Let my persecutors be put to shame, but let not me be put to shame. Let them be made afraid, but let not me be made afraid. Bring upon them the day of evil, and smite them with an utter destruction.[5]

Such were some of the utterances of Jeremiah in the dark months after Josiah's death. God was invisible then as now; secondary causes as numerous and active. The mass of men had as little faith in the unseen as they have to-day; accounting for all things as glibly, without reference to a higher power, as any modern natural philosopher. Yet here stands a man to whom God is the one great reality, in Whom all things literally live and have their being, the true King of the world and of each man in it. His law is the one rule of life, transgression of which must be denounced, and obedience to which, by a nation or individual, is imperative, under the most terrible penalties! How comes it that such ancient faith has

[1] Jer. xvii. 12-18.

[2] In India, children at school are often made to write on a smooth surface of sand strewn on the ground for the purpose, the writing being afterwards effaced to renew the smoothness.

[3] Jer. ii. 13; ix. 1.

[4] Lit., "shepherd."

[5] Lit., "double." See Jer. xvi. 16.

so wholly faded from among Christian mankind? Where shall we to-day look for a preacher, fearless, plain-spoken, earnest, sincere, like Jeremiah? If he were among us, would he fare much better than the prophet?

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE PROPHET FACE TO FACE WITH HIS AGE.

EXCEPTING the few verses in the historical books of Scripture, the prophecies of Jeremiah are the only source of our knowledge of the reign of Jehoiakim. Fortunately, however, the discourses of the prophet throw light incidentally on many characteristics of the times, while episodes of personal and public history are introduced, which bring the great preacher and his contemporaries for the moment vividly before us.

One of the first marks of growing religious laxity, after the death of Josiah, had been seen in the neglect of the Sabbath, contrary to the express command of the Law, which the nation had so recently pledged itself to observe. Alike in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy,[1] the honouring of that day by a total cessation from work, is commanded as a fundamental duty; to mark the wide difference between Israel and other nations, to foster religious reverence, and to give a religious tone to public and private life. Such a positive requirement supplied a simple and ready test of the spiritual condition of the community; for the bias towards obedience or dis-

[1] Exod. xx. 8–11; xxxi. 13, 14. Lev. xix. 3, 30; xxvi. 2. Deut. v. 12–15.

obedience to the Divine will was decisively marked by its observance or neglect. In his earlier discourses the prophet had exposed the sins of classes and individuals unsparingly, and announced the threatenings of the Divine indignation. Could this mode of address be to blame for the miscarriage of his ministry? Had he repelled rather than encouraged? He would at least try what effect it would have, simply to exhort to a right course; to remind his fellow-citizens of the eternal distinction between right and wrong; withholding, meanwhile, all threatenings. But the experiment met with no success. Instead of winning over his hearers, he had to bear a fresh series of persecutions[1] so bitter, that endurance once more gave way, and his human weakness broke out in imprecations against his enemies;[2] foes alike of God and of His prophet.

Yet, however imperilled, he could not be silent. Perhaps another variation in his mode of address might arrest attention and do good. He would show by a simple emblematic act how the fate of the nation was in the hands of God,[3] and leave the lesson to quiet reflection. But this course also, as we shall see, was a failure. His fellow-citizens "hardened their necks, that they might not hear his voice,"[4] and nothing, therefore, was left but to utter once more the terrible judgments impending over such inveterate stubbornness.

The short discourse respecting the Sabbath, though repeated at the town gates,[5] was first delivered, apparently, at the great central entrance to the outer court of the temple, used by all classes except the priests and Levites, who appear to have had doors at the sides for themselves. The Sabbath in its strict legal conception

[1] Jer. xviii. 18, 20. [2] Jer. xviii. 21, 22.
[3] Jer. xviii. [4] Jer. xviii. 15. [5] Jer. xvii. 19.

had already ceased to be kept. Instead of a day of rest, it was one of the busiest days of the week. Ordinary work being suspended, the population occupied itself with marketing, and disturbed the sacred house by the clamour and bustle of a fair. If we may judge from the state of things at a later time, under Nehemiah, Jerusalem had almost less quiet on the seventh day than on any other. The country people brought "wares and victuals,"[1] "wine, grapes, figs," and all kinds of produce,[2] into the city, for sale. A local colony of Phenician traders, having as heathens, no scruple about the day, added to the disorder and unseemliness, by exposing for sale dried fish from the sea, and from the Lake of Galilee, while the townsmen, generally, spread out all kinds of wares[3] in their booths, for the peasantry and the citizens. Nor was this desecration of the Sabbath limited to Jerusalem. It prevailed over the country at large. The wine presses were trodden on the sacred day, the sheaves of the harvest carried on asses to the threshing floors, and, doubtless, all other rural occupations pursued as through the week. Against such a clamant violation of the Law which the nation had so recently pledged itself before God to honour, Jeremiah remonstrated earnestly.

Thus says Jehovah,[4] cried he, Take heed in your hearts,[5] and neither bear any burden on the sabbath day, nor bring one in through the gates of Jerusalem, nor carry one out of your houses on the sabbath day, nor do any work, but hallow the sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers.[6] But *they* did not obey, but stiffened their neck in haughty defiance and would not hearken

[1] Neh. x. 31. [2] Lit., "burdens." Neh. xiii. 15, 16.
[3] Jer. xvii. 22. [4] Jer. xvii. 21-27. [5] Lit., "souls."
[6] If, as the new critics say, Jeremiah learned the Sabbath Law from Deuteronomy, he believed it to be an ancient book, known to their fathers.

or receive instruction. Yet, if *ye* honestly listen to Me, says Jehovah, to bring no burden through the gates of the city on the sabbath day, but hallow it, by doing no work on it, kings and princes, sitting on the throne of David, riding in chariots or on horses, with their great men, the men of Judah, and the citizens of Jerusalem, shall enter through the gates of this city, and it will remain for ever. And people will come from the cities of Judah and the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from the slopes of the Shephelah[1] on the west, and from the mountains to the east, and from the Negeb[2] on the south, bringing whole burnt offerings, and ordinary sacrifices, and flour and oil offerings, and incense and thanksgivings[3] to the House of Jehovah.

But if ye will not hearken to Me, to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden as ye enter through the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day, I will kindle a fire in its gates,[4] and it shall consume the palaces of Jerusalem, and shall not be quenched.

This kindly warning, however, was as fruitless as the other appeals of the prophet. Another form of address still remained. He would try what effect a striking symbolical act on his part would have; one specially fitted to disarm hostility, by its showing the possibility of the judgment of God being even yet averted by a timely repentance.

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[1] Vol. iii. p. 3.

[2] Vol. ii. p. 327. This passage shows the country still held by Judah: "the land of Benjamin" to the north; the Shephelah —or slopes of the western hills—the mountains reaching from the Shephelah to the Dead Sea; and the Negeb, or uplands of the south.

[3] Tōdāh. This is the word rendered "sacrifice of praise" in our version. It is frequently translated simply as "giving thanks," Neh. xii. 27, 31, 38, 40. "Thanksgiving," Ps. xxvi. 7; l. 14; lxix. 31. "Praise," xlii. 4; l. 23; lvi. 13.

[4] I will let loose an enemy on it, who shall do so.

The word of Jehovah, he began,[1] came to me, saying: Rise, and go down to the pottery in the valley under the town, and I will there make a communication to you. And I went down to the pottery, and behold, the potter was at work on his two wheels.[2] But when the vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in his hand, he made another vessel of it, such as he thought fit. And as I was looking, the word of Jehovah came to me, saying: Cannot I do with you, O House of Israel, as this potter does with the clay? says Jehovah. Behold, as the clay is in the hand of the potter, to do what he pleases with it, so you are in My hand, O House of Israel! At one time I speak respecting a nation or kingdom, to pluck it up, to pull it down and to destroy it. But if that nation against which I have spoken, turn from its wickedness, I repent of the evil I had purposed to do to it. At another time I speak respecting a nation or kingdom, to build it up and to plant it. But if it do evil in My sight, not listening to My voice, then I repent of the good I had promised to show it.

Speak, now,[3] to the men of Judah and to the citizens of Jerusalem, and say: Thus says Jehovah: Behold, I am framing evil against you, and meditating a design against you. Return ye, every one, from his evil course, and reform your ways and your deeds.

The prophet, however, hesitates to speak to the people

[1] Jer. xviii. 1-10.

[2] On the potter's wheel, etc., see *Kritiken u. Studien*, 1834, pp. 81 ff., 626 ff., 641 ff. At a village on the Dardanelles I saw a potter at work. He sat on a raised bench behind his frame, and turned his "wheels" with his foot, by a footboard. A pan of water and a heap of prepared clay were on the frame before him. Taking a lump of the clay and laying it on the wheel, which revolved horizontally, he rounded it into a low cone, dipping his hand in the water as he did so, to moisten its outside. Then thrusting his thumb into the top of the cone, the wheel all the time going round, he made a hole which increased with every revolution. Meanwhile his wet hands, pressed against the exterior, shaped the vessel as he thought fit. Of the "two wheels" in the text, one was simply to communicate motion, from the treadle, to the other placed above it.

[3] Jer. xviii. 11-17.

any more; they will only turn a deaf ear to him once more.

But, Lord,[1] they keep on saying, "It is all useless your speaking; we will follow our own thoughts, and will each carry out the stubbornness of his evil heart."

God therefore replies—

Thus says Jehovah:[2] Ask even the heathen! Who has heard such things? The Virgin of Israel has done a deed that makes one shudder! Does the snow of Lebanon[3] leave the rocks of the mountains?[4] Or do the cold flowing waters, that come from distant and unknown sources, dry up? Nature is constant, yet My people have forgotten Me. They burn incense to their no-gods, but *they* have made them stumble in their ways—the firm and smooth paths of old times,—and have led them into rough tracks; ways not cast up or made. Thus My people make their land an astonishment, a perpetual scoffing, every one that passes through it will be astonished, and will shake his head in amazement! I will scatter them for this before their enemy, as with a fierce storm from the east.[5] I will turn My back to them, not My face, in the day of their calamity.

But this address only increased the fury of the prophet's enemies.

"Come,"[6] said they to the crowd, "let us lay a plot against Jeremiah; for knowledge of the Law[7] shall *not* be lost from the

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[1] Jer. xviii. 12. [2] Jer. xviii. 13.

[3] Lebanon = "the white," from the limestone rock, or from the snow.

[4] Lit., "of the field" = open country.

[5] Jer. xiii. 24. The burning sirocco, or east wind, is meant.

[6] Jer. xviii. 18.

[7] The word Torah here used, is translated "teaching" by the new critics, but this is contrary to the constant usage of speech in the Old Testament. The Torah or Law is, itself, the embodiment of all teaching, as regards the relations of man to God, and it is the basis of all prophetic utterances. The multitude, in the text, claim for the priests the knowledge of the Law, strictly so called, which was committed to their keeping and study.

priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor revelation of God's word from the prophet, although Jeremiah perish. Come, let us smite him with the tongue, by reporting his words to the king, and bearing false witness against him, and let us pay no attention to any of his words."

Such determined malignity roused the indignation of the prophet, and for the moment overpowered his gentler nature. A son of the Old Testament, not of the New, he met their hatred with the fierce imprecations familiar to Orientals in all ages, and yet to be read in some of the Psalms.

Give heed to me, O Jehovah,[1] and hearken to the voice of my adversaries! Shall evil be repaid me for the good I have sought them,[2] that they dig a pit for my life? Think how I stood before Thee to seek good for them; to turn away Thy wrath from them.[3] Therefore, give Thou their sons to hunger;[4] deliver them to the sword! Let their wives be made childless and widows! Let their strong men be given over to death, their young men be smitten in battle by the sword! Let a cry sound from their houses, when Thou bringest on them a band of fighting men suddenly; for they have dug a pit to take me, and have laid snares for my

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[1] Jer. xviii. 19-23. [2] Jer. xiv. 7, 21.

[3] Orientals have in all ages been given to imprecation. The following is part of the curses pronounced against Russian Jews who venture in the smallest particular to disobey the commands of their Rabbis. It is quoted from a recent number of the *Century* Magazine:—"May the Lord's calamity hasten to overtake him; God the Creator break him, bend him! May fiends encounter him! May he be accursed wherever he stands! May the Lord visit him with consumption, brain fever, inflammation, insanity, ulcers, and jaundice! May he be as chaff which the wind drives before it, and may the Angel of God pursue him! May he encounter direst despair, and may he fall into the net spread for his feet by God! He shall be clothed with curses as with a garment. And God shall give no forgiveness to this man, but pour His wrath and His vengeance upon him; and all the curses shall enter into him that are written in the Law."

feet. But Thou, Jehovah, knowest all their deadly plot against me! Do not forgive their iniquity, or blot out their sin from Thy sight! Let them be overthrown before Thee! In the time of Thine anger deal Thou with them!

The obduracy and malignity of Judah had been borne with till now, but the cup of its sin was at last full. The irrevocable sentence of doom could no longer be delayed. A Divine intimation, conveyed to Jeremiah we know not how, directed him,[1] therefore, to buy one of the ordinary small narrow-mouthed bottles, of common coarse red earthenware, still used by the peasants to hold their drinking water.[2] He was then to summon the elders of the people and of the priests, as leading men of the community, and go with them to the Potsherd Gate, at the south-west corner of the city, over the Valley of Hinnom; a spot still marked by a vast accumulation of fragments of ancient earthenware. There he was to repeat a message God had charged him to deliver to them, and, as he did so, he was to throw down the bottle at their feet, and shiver it to pieces, as a significant enforcement of his words. Jerusalem was finally given over to destruction. It would be destroyed as utterly as the jar, shattered to fragments in their sight. Nor was this the only lesson. To break a bottle or jar beside any one, is still the familiar expression, in Palestine, of strong detestation of the person thus marked, and, as it were, an imprecation on him and his of utter and final destruction.[3] The burden which the prophet was commissioned to utter was as follows:

Hear the words of Jehovah,[4] ye kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Thus says Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel:

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[1] Jer. xix. 1, 2.
[2] Neil's *Palestine*, p. 120.
[3] *Land and Book*, p. 641.
[4] Jer. xix. 3–9.

Behold, I will bring evil on this place, which will make the ears of every one who hears of it tingle! Because they have forsaken Me, and treated this place as if it were profane ground,[1] and have burned incense in it to other gods, which neither they, nor their fathers, nor the kings of Judah have known: because of this, and also because they have filled this place with the blood of innocent children, and built the high places of Baal, to burn their sons in the fire as offerings to Baal; which I neither commanded, nor have spoken of, and which never even came into My mind: therefore, behold the days come, says Jehovah, that this place shall no longer be called the Tophet, or the Valley of Ben Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter.[2] And I will empty out on the dust the counsels of Judah and Jerusalem in this place, as this water is now poured from this vessel."

Here, the prophet probably enforced his words, by emptying the water-bottle on the ground as he uttered them.

"And I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hands of those that seek their lives, and I will give their corpses for meat to the birds of the heavens, and the beasts of the earth; and I will make this city an astonishment and a scoffing; every one that passes through it will be astonished and hiss at its misfortunes.[3] And I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and of their daughters;[4] every one, indeed, will eat the flesh of the other, in the distress and misery with which their enemies, and those that seek their lives, will crush them.

At this point the prophet, as directed, suddenly dashed to the ground the water bottle in his hand,[5] and, as it flew into a thousand pieces, went on—

Even so, says Jehovah of hosts, will I shatter this people and

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[1] Lit., "foreign, or strange."
[2] These verses are a repetition of chap. vii. 31, 32.
[3] Lit., "its blows."
[4] Deut. xxxviii. 53–57. Lev. xxvi. 29. Lam iv. 10.
[5] Jer xix. 10–13.

this city, as this bottle, which cannot be made whole again, has been shattered. And they will bury their dead even in a polluted spot like Tophet, because no room is left elsewhere. Thus will I do to this place, says Jehovah, and to its inhabitants, and make this place like the foul Tophet close to us here in this valley. And the houses of Jerusalem and of the kings of Judah will be like the place of the unclean Tophet—the abhorrence—yea, all the houses will be polluted on whose roofs they have burnt incense to the Host of Heaven, and poured out drink offerings to other gods.

If a dervish were to tell a crowd at Mecca that, as a punishment for the wickedness of the inhabitants, the city would be taken by the infidel, and the Great Mosque, the centre of the Mahommedan world—too holy for any Jew or Christian even to approach—the El Haram, the Inviolable, the Sacred—be turned into a slaughter-house for pigs, the execration of the Mussulman faith—it would be something similar to Jeremiah's declaration that Jerusalem and its Temple, the object of a superstitious reverence, would be trampled under foot by the Chaldean, and turned into a Tophet, the scene of human sacrifice—a spot fit only to be spat upon and abhorred, the very name of which was used as an equivalent for all that was vilest and most despised.[1] Popular indignation would inevitably be roused in the bigoted population of the centre of Islam in the one case, and was set ablaze in that of the Holy City in the other.

Truths so unpalatable would have been hard to bear under any circumstances; but Jeremiah was not contented with uttering them only to his first small audience. Moving from the Potsherd Gate and the neighbourhood of

[1] In Job xvii. 6 the second clause should be read—"And I am become as one in whose face men spit"—lit., "a Tophet." Our translators have used the word "Tophet" as equivalent to a drum, the Hebrew for which is very like it.

Tophet, he made his way to the forecourt of the temple,[1] in which the people at the moment were gathered; perhaps especially to invoke the protection and favour of Jehovah. Taking his stand among them, it may be on the steps leading up to the inner court, he startled the worshippers by proclaiming in the name of Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel, amidst a storm of loud taunts and mockeries,[2] that He was about to bring on Jerusalem, and every town of the kingdom,[3] all the evil He had spoken against it, because they had hardened their necks,[4] that they might not hear the Divine words. In his address at the Potsherd Gate he had denounced only Jerusalem. Now, the whole country was included in the approaching doom. Only a sentence of this second address is given, but it was evidently even fuller and more explicit than that just delivered at the city gate. To invade the very temple itself, thus, with a proclamation of its speedy ruin and profanation, seemed a defiance of its authorities, and an intolerable outrage on public feeling. Such a daring speaker, so regardless of all propriety, so unabashed in his bearing towards constituted dignities, so free in his charges against every one, could no longer be endured. He had only spoken the words put in his mouth by God; but then, as now, it was imperative that the pulpit speak with careful moderation as the price of public favour. For sermons immeasurably less severe than the addresses of Jeremiah, Latimer, the prophet-preacher of the Reformation, is still denounced by the parasites of Rome, three centuries after his martyrdom, as vulgar and personal. Human nature has been always the same. A man so coarse and offensive as to

[1] Jer. xix. 14; xx. 1. [2] See ver. 7, 8.
[3] Lit., "her towns;" that is, towns subject to Jerusalem.
[4] = Shown their stubbornness and obstinacy.

speak the plain truth, without mincing his words, must be taught manners. Instead of muffling the drum ecclesiastic to spare polite ears, he had beaten it as if he meant that all should hear. Instead of confining himself to generalities, he had brought the truth home. He had used his office seriously, not as a shrewd man of the world.[1] Among his audience had been Pashur, the commandant[2] of the temple—a priest by birth,[3] and also a nominal member of the order of prophets—a position he used to "prophesy lies."[4] He, at least, would no longer tolerate this hitherto privileged railer at priests, temple, prophets, king, nobles, and people. Ordering the temple police to seize Jeremiah, he was ignominiously thrown down and bastinadoed,[5] and then hurried, bruised and bleeding, to the stocks, which stood in the temple market at the Benjamin Gate, between the upper and lower courts, on the north side.[6] Into these his head, hands, and feet were thrust, and he was left

[1] In an American paper I find an admirable satire on the conventional sermon of our day. A negro preacher tells his temporary substitute, that he must "see that the people get religion, lay hold on salvation, an' all dat sort of ting; but, mind, don't you tell dem not to steal de turkeys! My congregation won't stand dat kind o' talk!"

[2] In the A. V. "chief governor." "Commandant, or chief overseer, or inspector," Mühlau and Volck, Hitzig, Ewald, Keil, De Wette, Sachs, Eichhorn.

[3] Immer, his father—probably the same as Amaziah (Neh. x. 3; xii. 2)—was the head of the 16th course of priests, 1 Chron. xxiv. 14. He was, in fact, a dignitary of the Church; something like an English dean, for position.

[4] Jer. xx. 6.

[5] Jer. xx. 2. The Egyptian paintings show that the victim was thrown on his face and held by the head and feet, while being beaten.

[6] *Keil.*

thus bent together[1] to spend the night as best he could, exposed to the jeers of the crowd, till the temple closed, and to the cold dews of later hours.

But Pashur soon had cause to regret his violence. Earnest conviction is not to be silenced by force. Jeremiah had urged what every man's conscience, on reflection, felt was right. He had only denounced what must bring the ruin he predicted. He had truth on his side, and he was faithful to it, and therefore invincible. If he had spoken out, the times needed his doing so. To proclaim truth, however unpleasant, was his sacred duty as a prophet. A night's sleep brought Pashur to a calmer mood, and Jeremiah was set free in the morning; his enemies perhaps thinking he had learned a lesson to keep his tongue in order.

Never were men more in error. Making his way straight to the high official himself,[2] his victim terrified him by announcing that Jehovah had changed his name from Pashur to "Terror on every side."

For thus saith Jehovah [continued the prophet], I, Jehovah, will make you a terror to yourself and to all your friends. And they will fall by the sword of their enemies, and your eyes will see it. And I will give all Judah into the hands of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive to Babylon, and slay them with the sword. Still more, I will deliver all the riches[3] of this city, and all its property, and all its glory, and all the trea-

[1] The word for stocks, *Mahpecheth*, from *Haphach*, to bend. There was a "house of the stocks" (2 Chron. xvi. 10), "prison-house" in A.V., in jails. Perhaps there was a prison in the temple, with a room in it for the stocks, like the torture-room of old dungeons. The word used here occurs in 2 Chron. xvi. 10; Jer. xx. 2, 3; xxix. 26. Another word, "*Sad*," means stocks into which the legs alone were inserted. It occurs in Job xiii. 27; xxxiii. 11.

[2] Jer. xx. 3-5.

[3] Lit., "stores."

sures of the kings of Judah, into the hand of their enemies, who shall plunder them, and seize them, and carry them off to Babylon.

Then, addressing Pashur directly, before his astonished attendants and the people round, he added—

And you, Pashur,[1] and all that dwell in your house will be dragged off into captivity, and you will come to Babylon, and you will die and be buried there, you and all your partisans,[2] to whom you have prophesied lies.[3]

The second offence was worse than the first; but Pashur dared not arrest him again, and allowed him quietly to withdraw. The excitement was no sooner past,

[1] Jer. xx. 6. [2] Lit., "friends."

[3] From the fact that this mock prophet was a priest, and an officer of the temple, the new critics (*Bible in the Jewish Church*, pp. 285–6) actually create the theory that "the official prophets of Judah appear to have been connected with the priesthood and the sanctuary until the close of the kingdom." "They were in fact" (it is affirmed) "part of the establishment of the temple, subject to priestly discipline!" To prove this, the fact of Jeremiah being put in the stocks is quoted. As if he would not have been amenable to "discipline" had he been a common man! How many of the prophets were priests? One in a hundred? Yet this is a sample of the wild assertions current in our day. It is actually maintained that, because a number of the so called prophets were corrupt—the order, as such, "played into the priests' hands!" What of Jeremiah, and the others in the Canon? Were they the true representatives of the order of prophets, or were the false prophets its representatives?

Pashur was to be carried to Babylon and to die there, but not by violence. In fact his house was one of the most numerous at the close of the Captivity. Ezra ii. 37, 38. Yet he must have suffered an agony of remorse, at the ruin his policy had brought on his country. He had urged an alliance with Egypt, in opposition to the advice of Jeremiah, and had even gone the length of pretending to prophetic powers to support his counsels.

however, than there came a reaction on the sufferer. The sensitive nature that had been so roused, now for a time yielded to the deepest dejection, and in this frame he gave way to an uncontrollable outburst of passionate grief.

"Cursed be the day,"[1] cries he, when he had reached the privacy of his lonely chamber, "Cursed be the day on which I was born! Let not the day when my mother bore me be blessed! Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, 'A man child is born to thee,' making him very glad![2] Let that man be like the cities which Jehovah overthrew without pity! Let him hear the cry of the attacked and the shouting of attackers at noontide, because he did not kill me when I was born, so that my mother might have been my grave, and I had never seen life. Why did I come forth from the womb that my days might be spent in shame?"

But this gloom presently passes away, and he betakes himself, as was his wont, to Jehovah, his stronghold in the time of trouble.[3]

O Jehovah[4] [he breaks forth], Thou didst lead me to speak, and I have spoken by the inner voice sent from Thee to my soul, and I yielded to it. Thou hast taken hold of me, and hast[5] overpowered me, and made me speak. But because I do so, I am

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[1] Jer. xx. 14–18.

[2] The servant who announces the birth of a son to his master is richly rewarded, but every one hesitates to tell the birth of a daughter.

[3] I have, with Ewald, transferred verses 14–18, as they appear to come in most appropriately at this place.

[4] Jer. xx. 7–10.

[5] This verse shows that the prophetic impulse was irresistible; that the prophet could not keep back from speaking, whatever might be the result to himself. See Amos iii. 8. "The Lord God has spoken, who can but prophesy." See also Jer. xx. 9.

daily a derision; every one mocks me.[1] For every time I speak I have to utter loud complaints,[2] and cry out against violence and robbery. The word of Jehovah has only brought down on me reproach and derision the whole day long. So deeply have I felt this, that I said to myself, "I will no longer make mention of Him, or speak in His name." But I felt as if there were a burning fire in me, shut up in my bones, and I was worn out with holding back, and could refrain no longer. For I heard the slanderous talk of many: "Terror," said they, "presses him on every side.[3] Report him to the authorities." "We will report him." My very acquaintances,[4] my familiar companions,[5] say, "Perhaps we can draw him out and turn his words against him, so that we may get the better of him, and take our revenge on him."

But Jehovah[6] stands by me as a mighty champion, and therefore my persecutors still stumble and cannot overcome me; they will be put to utter shame and everlasting reproach which shall not be forgotten, because they have not acted uprightly. But, O Jehovah of hosts, who triest the righteous, and lookest into the reins and heart, let me see Thy vengeance on them, for I have committed my cause to Thee. Sing to Jehovah, praise ye

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[1] Compare the words of that great prophet and preacher of the 15th century, Savonarola. "Thy sins, O Florence, are the cause of these stripes (the public misfortunes of the state). And now, repent, give alms, offer prayers, become united. O people, I have been a father to thee. I have wearied myself all the days of my life, to make known to thee the truths of the faith and of holy living, *and I have had nothing but tribulations, derision, and reproach.*" Clark's *Savonarola*, p. 169. So fares it with the true prophet in all ages. A bad sign for us clergy of to-day!

[2] The loud cry of one in pain is primarily meant.

[3] These words are those given as a name to Pashur, "Magor Missabib," as if they had told the prophet that "terror was round *himself*, not round Pashur."

[4] Lit., "men of my peace," who greet me with the ordinary salutation, "Peace be with you!"

[5] Lit. "the keepers of my side," who do not leave my side.

[6] Jer. xx. 11-13.

Jehovah, for He delivers the soul of the helpless[1] from the hand of evildoers.

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[1] The word in the Hebrew is Ebiōn, which comes from a root meaning *to want, to desire.* Hence it primarily means the poor or needy; then, distressed, wretched, afflicted. It refers specially to one who, while he suffers wrong, has a true religious humility, and in this sense is used along with the "*righteous*," Amos ii. 6. The Ebionites used it as the name of their sect, claiming to be the "poor in spirit, of whom is the kingdom of heaven," Matt. v. 3. It is twenty-three times translated *poor* in the Old Testament, thirty-three times *needy*, and once, 1 Sam. ii. 8, *beggar*. In the great majority of cases there is the accessory idea of godliness. So truly have the poor, in all ages, had the honour of giving a name to the people of God.

## CHAPTER XV.

### GROWING DARKNESS, RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL.

THE opening years of Jehoiakim's reign were the most active of Jeremiah's public life. Affected intensely by the collapse of Josiah's religious policy, and the headlong rashness with which the heathen party were dragging the king and the nation to their ruin, he took every opportunity of seeking to bring his fellow-countrymen to reason, and, if possible, of persuading them to a worthier course.

Hitherto all his efforts had been in vain; but he could not quietly let his nation perish, whatever might be their hostility to his message. It was growing constantly clearer, however, that nothing could save them. The commandant of the temple had already put him in the stocks, after having bastinadoed him, but no personal indignity or suffering could keep him back from still another attempt to arrest public attention. Moved by the inner voice, which he recognised as that of Jehovah, he took his place once more in the spacious eastern forecourt or precinct[1] of the temple, before a vast multitude of worshippers, from Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah,[2] gathered, perhaps, at the time of one of the

[1] *Hitzig.* [2] Jer. xxvi. 2, 3.

great feasts, and in the presence of a body of priests and prophets,[1] who had, it may be, assembled specially to hear him. He had received a command from God not to keep back a single word of His Divine message, in case they might possibly listen and turn from their evil ways, so that Jehovah might "repent of the evil He had purposed to do them." A brief summary of his appeal is given in the twenty-sixth chapter; but, if we may judge from the full record of a very similar address delivered at another time,[2] his present one embodied the essence of all his teaching, delivered in alternate strains of fierce accusation, biting irony, overpowering grief and passionate lamentation.[3] Nothing would save them but sincere moral reform. Their continuance in the land depended on their amending their ways and their doings. It was no use for them to trust to any fancied relations to Jehovah, as His people, or to the sacred rites and institutions of their religion. If they would not perish, they must live pure and godly lives, banishing wrong and violence from their midst, and illustrating sincere devotion to Jehovah by habitual obedience to His holy law. Otherwise, neither the Mosaic ritual, nor their being the chosen people, nor even the presence of the temple of Solomon in their midst, would prevent their ruin. Round this sacred fabric their fondest and proudest superstitions gathered. They took for granted that no evil could befall them while it stood, and that it would stand for ever. To hint at its possible destruction was to wound them in their tenderest sensibilities. As in the days of Christ and the Apostles,[4] to say a word against it was akin to blasphemy; for was

[1] Jer. xx. 8. [2] Jer. chap. vii.-x.
[3] Stanley's *Jewish Church*, vol. ii. p. 449.
[4] Matt. xxvi. 61. Acts vi. 14.

it not the house of Jehovah, and would He not defend His own dwelling place? To speak of its fall was a sin that demanded death. Nothing daunted, however, Jeremiah went on to repeat what he had said already, at an earlier time.

Thus saith the Lord,[1]—cried he, winding up his address,—If ye will not hearken to Me to walk in my Law which I have set before you, and to listen to the words of My servants, the prophets, whom I send to you, earnestly and unceasingly, though you have not listened to them in the past, then, I will make this house like Shiloh, and this city a curse,[2] among all the nations of the earth!

Shiloh lay about thirty miles straight north of Jerusalem; and though once the national sanctuary, famous from the memories of Eli and of the great prophet Samuel, had been in ruins for five hundred years.[3] To predict a similar fate for the magnificent building in whose courts they stood, was more than the priests and prophets, or the crowd, could endure. Closing, with a great uproar, round the preacher, as their descendants did round Paul, on nearly the same spot, six hundred years later,[4] they seized him, amidst loud cries that he should die, for having predicted, in the name of Jehovah, the destruction of their temple and city.

Fortunately for Jeremiah, news of the tumult was carried at once[5] to the palace; if, indeed, the sound did not itself spread the alarm. In any case, it reached the ears of some "princes" or "nobles" who were, at the moment, assembled in the royal building, or perhaps, in these oligarchical times, had their residence there.

[1] Jer. xxvi. 4–9.
[2] It would be pointed out as the object of a Divine curse. Deut. xxviii. 37.
[3] Vol. iii. p. 35.
[4] Acts xxi. 30.
[5] Jer. xxvi. 10–15.

As deputies of the king, they were the high judges[1] on all causes and, as such, instantly hurried over to the temple, and took their seats as a court, in the inner division of the temple space—the portion set apart for the men—before a new gate built by king Jotham, the son of Uzziah, a hundred and fifty years before, and known as "the higher gate," or the "gate of Jehovah." Their arrival was providental, for, as has often happened since, the calm impartiality of the civil power was to check the fury of religious violence[2] and deliver its intended victim.

The priests and prophets having formally made their accusation, demanded a sentence of death; appealing to the crowd to support their charge. But Jewish law permitted a prisoner to defend himself, and Jeremiah at once took advantage of the privilege. Addressing, alike, the judges and the crowd, he boldly told them that it was Jehovah, not he, who had spoken.

"Jehovah," said he, "sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words ye have heard. It is not therefore against me, but against God, you are contending! Amend your ways, then, and your doings, since what I have said is from Jehovah; and He will not execute the judgments He has uttered against you. But as for me, the mere instrument in God's hands, do with me as seems to you good and just. Be assured, however, that, if you kill me, you bring innocent blood on yourselves, on your city, and on its citizens, for it is the very truth, that I have been sent by Jehovah, to speak in your ears every word I have uttered."

The defence was triumphant, and it was, as it ought to have been, successful. "This man" said the judges,

[1] The judges were chosen from the highest ranks. Keil's *Archäol.*, p. 704.

[2] *Stanley*, vol. ii. p. 450.

"is not worthy to die, for he has only spoken to us in the name of Jehovah, our God." Amidst all their worldliness and venality, they for once recognised what was just. The fearless words of the prophet, moreover, may have awed them for the moment, as those of Paul did the corrupt Festus.[1] Nor had he been without friends, for Ahikam, one of the court, stood by him throughout.[2] He found support, also, where he might not have expected it. A number of the elders of the towns and villages of Judah came out from the crowd, and addressed the bench in his favour.[3]

"The prophet Micah of Moresheth," said they, "who prophesied in the days of Hezekiah, said to all the people of Judah—Thus saith Jehovah, 'Zion shall be ploughed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the Lord's house be turned into a wooded height.'[4] Did Hezekiah the king, and all Judah, put him to death? Did he not, rather, fear Jehovah, and pray to Him, so that He repented of the evil He had spoken against them? If we kill Jeremiah, we are committing what will bring great evil against our souls!"

After such a defence, nothing remained but to dismiss the prophet at once, as innocent of all blame. But the danger he escaped had been real,[5] for Urijah, his contemporary, a prophet, had already, as we have seen, been brought back, by Jehoiakim, from Egypt, and beheaded, for words exactly similar.

Meanwhile, great events were transpiring on the Tigris. The united armies of Babylon and Media, after a long siege, had taken Nineveh. Its last king, variously known as Assuredilili, Saracus, Esarhaddon II., or Sardana-

[1] Acts xxiv. 5.
[2] Jer. xx. 24.
[3] Jer. xxvi. 16–19.
[4] Vol. iv. p. 358. Micah iii. 12.
[5] Jer. xxvii. 20–24.

palus VII.,[1] has left few traces of his reign, beyond an inscription on some bricks in a small palace which he had built. He still, however, called himself "king of nations and of the earth."[2] But the end of his glory was at hand. A host of enemies had gathered round his capital in the very year of Jehoiakim's accession, B.C. 610. The Medes and Babylonians were the chief assailants, but they had numerous contingents from widely separate regions; for the whole earth seemed to have risen up at last against its destroyer. With the Medes, under Cyaxares, marched bands of wild Cimmerians, from beyond the Caucasus; the warriors of Van, from the mountains of Armenia; the tribe of Sepharad from the shores of the Black Sea;[3] and a force of Persians.[4] Nabopolassar, the king of Babylon, once the trusted general of Assyria, had with him troops of Arabs from the distant south, and doubtless many other auxiliaries. Assyria, however, died hard. If we may trust the Greek authorities, for there are no others, the assailants were three times defeated; but a fresh force having joined them from the east, a battle was fought outside the gates, in which a brother of the king of Nineveh was killed, and the Assyrian army routed. Assuredilili, driven at last to make a final stand in his capital, closed its gates, before which the enemy presently sat down, determined to capture the great

[1] Sayce, *Records of the Past*, vol. xi. p. 79. *Vigouroux*, vol. iv. p. 284. Nothing certain is known of the last kings of Nineveh. G. Smith thinks there were two after Assurbanipal; Oppert recognises two, Assuredilili and Sardanapalus VII. Schrader fancies Assuredilili was the last king. Saracus seems a corruption of this name, as Sardanapalus is of Assurbanipal.

[2] *Western Asiatic Inscriptions*, vol. i. pl. 8. n. 3.

[3] *Records of the Past*, vol. xi. p. 79.

[4] Smith's *Assyria*, p. 190.

stronghold. The siege is said to have lasted over two years, for the walls were 100 feet high and 50 feet thick. Some fragments of tablets, the bad writing of which seems to show that they were only the first rough text, survive from these days of mortal struggle. The king had proclaimed a solemn assembly, to invoke the gods, and gain their help to raise the blockade and avert the attack. But it is a question if it was ever held, for the capture of Nineveh and the destruction of the empire, seem to have prevented a fair copy of the proclamation having been made. Some lines of the second fragment are complete. They run thus.

"O Sun-god,[1] great Lord, I have prayed to thee. O god of fixed destiny, remove our sin. Let the general proclaim among the ranks sacred rites and festivals for 100 days and 100 nights, from the third of this month Iyar,[2] to the fifteenth of Ab.[3] We learn that the soldiers of Cyaxares, and those of the Cimmerians, the men of Van, and other enemies, are multitudinous, and inundate the country round."

A great assault had been delivered by "the rebels" on the seventh day of the feast, and they had then marched off, with a train of battering engines and other machines of war, against various Assyrian towns and cities, a number of which fell into their hands. A momentary glimpse into the long dead ages, and then the darkness of three thousand years falls, once more, on besieged and besieger! A great rise of the Tigris, in the third spring, is said to have brought about the fall of the city, the flood having undermined part of the wall. Ruin was inevitable after such a catastrophe, but the king determined not to fall alive into the

[1] *Records of the Past*, vol. xi. p. 82.
[2] April. [3] July.

hand of his enemies. Gathering his wives and treasures into one part of the palace, he set the building on fire, and perished in the flames, with those round him. It was, apparently, the year B.C. 607,[1] the third after the death of Josiah. Entering the city by the breach made by the river, the besiegers laid waste its palaces and temples, and carried off its inhabitants into captivity. Built only of dried mud, the houses soon crumbled into dust. Nor did Nineveh ever rise again. There is no mention of it in the records of the great Persian dynasty of Darius, and Herodotus, who passed very near its site, if not actually over it, in the middle of the fifth century B.C., speaks of the Tigris as "the river on which Nineveh formerly stood."[2] Fifty years later,[3] its very name had been forgotten, for Xenophon, who encamped on its site, or very near it, speaks only of a "great deserted city there, called Larissa, inhabited in old times by the Medes, and of another, 24 miles off,[4] called Mespila, the wall of which alone remained."[5] So utterly had the "Bloody City" perished. "The gates of her rivers had been opened; her palaces dissolved."[6] The words of Nahum and Zephaniah had been literally fulfilled. After having ruled for more than 600 years, with hideous tyranny and violence, from the Caucasus and the Caspian to the Persian Gulf, and from beyond the Tigris to Asia Minor and Egypt, it had vanished like a dream;

[1] B.C. 606 in Clinton's *Fasti Hellen.*, vol. i. p. 269. Schrader gives the date of the siege as from 609–606.

[2] *Herod.*, i. 193. Herodotus returned from his travels before B.C. 454. Supposing he passed the site of Nineveh in B.C. 456, there would have been an interval of only 150 years from the taking of the city. Yet its site was all that remained of it.

[3] B.C. 401.

[4] Six parasangs.

[5] Xen., *Anab.*, iii. 4, 7, 10.

[6] Nahum ii. 6–11.

its very site doubtful for nearly twenty-four centuries! The cup of its iniquity full, at last, to the brim, had been held to its lips! Such a catastrophe was well nigh without parallel in the history of empires To the farthest verge of civilization it filled, for the time, the minds of all men.

NINEVEH. *From Rich.*

Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar of Lebanon, wrote Ezekiel,[1]

[1] Ezek. xxxi. 3-9. Ewald translates the word Asshur as meaning the highest cedar, but Hitzig shows that this is a mistake, and that the prophet speaks of Assyria. Smend applies the passage to Egypt, but the grounds he advances for doing so are of little weight.

fair in its leafage; a thicket for shadow; mighty for height; its top rose into the clouds. The waters had made him great; the flood had nourished him; its streams flowing round the place where he grew, and sending out its canals to all the trees of the field. Through this, his height was exalted above all the trees of the field; his branches grew great; his boughs stretched themselves out through the many waters the flood supplied. All the fowls of the heavens made their nest in them, and all the wild beasts of the field brought forth their young under his branches, and all the heathen nations sat under his shadow. Thus fair was he in his size and in the length of his branches; for his root was by many waters. The cedars in the garden of God were not tall enough to hide him; the cypresses could not equal his branches, nor the plane trees his boughs; no tree in the garden of God was like him for beauty. I had made him fair, says Jehovah, through the multitude of his branches, and all the trees of Eden, in the garden of God, envied him!

Therefore, thus says the Lord Jehovah;[1] Because he was great in height, and shot up his boughs among the clouds, and his heart was lifted up by this greatness—I have delivered him into the hands of a mighty leader of the nations; he will surely deal with him; for his wickedness I have driven him out.[2] Strange and terrible heathen peoples cut him down, and left him lying on the mountains; his branches fell into all the valleys; his boughs lay broken in pieces in all the hollows of the earth, and all the nations went from under his shadow, and left him. On his fallen trunk all the birds of the heaven alight, and all the wild beasts of the field trample on his branches. (All this is done) that no trees by the waters boast themselves of their height, nor lift up their crown among the clouds; that none of all the trees that drink up the waters vaunt themselves in their tallness;[3] for they are all delivered over to death, to the underworld, with the sons of men who have sunk into the grave.

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[1] Ezek. xxxi. 10-17.

[2] The pronouns vary in person in the Hebrew. I have used the second throughout for clearness, English not permitting the same usage.

[3] Ewald, "that no waterdrinker contend in its pride with its God."

Thus says the Lord Jehovah, In the day when he went down to Sheol I caused a lamentation to be made; I covered up the flood in the earth, on his account, that it should no more stream forth, and held back its streams, and its many waters were stayed; I robed Lebanon in black for him, and all the trees of the field drooped because of him. I made the nations tremble at the crash of his fall, when I cast him down to Sheol, to those that are sunk in the Pit; and all the trees of Eden in the underworld[1] —the best and fairest of Lebanon, all waterdrinkers[2]—comforted themselves, for they, too, went down with him to Sheol, to them that have fallen by the sword—they, who were his strength, who sat under his shadow in the midst of the nations.

While the siege of Nineveh was in progress, Necho had pressed on to the Euphrates, immediately after having installed Jehoiakim king at Jerusalem, and had taken the great city of Carchemish,[3] the ancient capital of the Hittite empire, and still, in his day, a place of the highest commercial importance. The Medes and Babylonians, with their allies—too much occupied in besieging the capital on the Tigris, and subduing the territories east of the Euphrates—were in no condition to trouble him, for the time, in his new acquisitions. Egypt could now boast of having restored the ancient glories of Rameses II. or Thothmes III.[4] From Carchemish, southwards, all Syria, Phenicia and Palestine, with Idumea, and the nations east of the Jordan, were under his sway.[5] The Assyrian dominions east of the Euphrates were divided between them, after the fall of Nineveh, by the two chief powers; Media getting the lion's share; Babylon obtaining in the meantime, only Babylonia[6] and the

[1] The great rulers of men.
[2] Planted by the waters, and therefore vigorous.
[3] Jer. xlvi. 2.
[4] Vol. ii. pp. 47–50. [5] *Babylonia*, Smith and Sayce, p. 152.
[6] *Herod.*, i. 106.

regions south of it, with the expectation however, of wresting Necho's conquests from him, and only waiting an opportunity to do so.

Jerablus, the ancient Carchemish, lay on the right or western bank of the Upper Euphrates, half way between the villages of Sadjur and Biredjik, about 320 miles almost exactly north of Jerusalem by the compass; about 80 miles due east of the uppermost corner of the Levant; and about 40 miles south-west of Urfa. To the late George Smith belongs the honour of identifying its site, during his last fatal journey. His note books, now in the British Museum, inform us[1] that two days after leaving Aleppo, he reached Meskeneh, in "the vast bed of the Euphrates," and found "large mounds, brick buildings, (the ruins of) a considerable place." Five hours from this, the river valley opened out on a plain, on which were "traces of a great city." Next day other "immense ruins" were met, but they were mostly Saracenic. The following morning he rode along the banks of the Euphrates to Jerablus,[2] and found there "a grand site, vast walls and palace mounds, 8,000 feet round; many monoliths with inscriptions." It was "the site of Carchemish."[3] The heaps of earth which mark the former walls of this great capital, measure hardly two miles in circumference, but a vast population seems, from many indications, to have lived along the banks of the Euphrates, outside the fortifications. Situated in the midst of a rich country, at a safe distance from the barbarians of the north, and the wild tribes of the south, Carchemish became at a very early period the centre of the great caravan trade to and from Western Asia,[3] and

[1] Quoted by Fried. Delitzsch, in *Wo lag das Paradies?* p. 266.
[2] Written by Smith, Yaraboloos.
[3] Sayce had identified Carchemish with Circesium, *Records of*

rose to still greater importance as a mercantile city after its conquest by Assyria.[1] Its "maneh," a coin weighing the sixtieth part of a talent, was one of the chief standards of commerce, far and near.[2] Its sculptures, bas-reliefs, and inscriptions in the Hittite language, attest a very advanced civilization, and, indeed, it was probably through its agency that the culture of Asia passed to Greece, by way of the Hittite kingdoms of Asia Minor.

Necho and the Egyptians had been in Carchemish for nearly three years, when the fall of Nineveh left Nabopolassar free to turn his forces against them. So long as they held that city, his advance was barred to the west and south; the only regions left open to him by the treaty with Cyaxares. Far from the base of their operations in Egypt, however, and composed largely of mercenaries, the army of Necho, though certain to offer a brave resistance, was hardly equal to a conflict with the veteran troops of Nabopolassar. Great efforts were made to bring strong reinforcements from the Nile, their march remaining vividly painted by Jeremiah, who may have seen these, or the troops of a later campaign, hurrying forward. It was a time of intense excitement

*the Past*, vol. iii. p. 88. Maspero fancied he had found its site at Bambyce or Mabog, a few miles from the Euphrates, east of Aleppo, *Histoire Ancienne, etc.*, p. 186. *De Carchemis Oppidi situ.* 1873.

[1] By Sargon, B.C. 717.

[2] Sayce, *Records of the Past*, vol. iii. p. 88. The "Maneh," or Mina, was equal to 50 sacred shekels. See *Sept.*, Ezek. xlv. 12. In 1 Kings x. 17, another shekel is mentioned of half the value (weight); 100 going to the Mina. It was the *common* shekel, worth about 1*s.* 4*d.*; the sacred shekel being worth about 2*s.* 8*d.* *Mühlau und Volck*, art. *Maneh.* Madden, *Money and Weights of the Bible*, art. *Shekel.*

in Judah. Jehoiakim was a vassal of Necho, and would only exchange his yoke for that of Babylon, if Carchemish fell. But the prophet foresaw the result. "The word of the Lord" left no doubt of it. The Chaldean was to be victorious. It was in B.C. 606, the fourth year of Jehoiakim—shortly after the fall of Nineveh—that matters came to a crisis. Speaking, as it were, to the Egyptian king and his army, Jeremiah begins:

Prepare ye the round target[1] for the light armed troops, and the shield that covers the whole body, for your heavy infantry, and press forward to the battle! Harness the chariot horses, ye chariot fighters; mount the chargers, ye cavalry;[2] array yourselves in helmets, ye footmen; brighten your spears; put on your coats of mail![3]

But the prophet sees the well appointed host defeated.

Why do I see them dismayed? They turn back; their chief warriors are struck down; they flee at their swiftest, and do not look back. Terror is on every side, says Jehovah! The quickest runner will not get off, nor the warrior save himself. They shall stumble and fall in the north, by the river Euphrates.

"Who is this that comes up like the Nile in flood, when it is overflowed? Whose waters toss themselves like the waves of the Nile branches in the Delta?" It is Egypt. It rises up like the Nile; its waters move in waves like the Nile arms. "I will rise and cover the earth," says he: "I will destroy cities, and those that dwell in them." Rear up ye horse, rush on ye chariots; go forth ye mighty men of Cush and of Lybia,[4] who carry the shield; ye Lydians,[5] who hold and bend the bow!

But that day is not *theirs* but the Lord's—Jehovah of hosts; a day of vengeance; to avenge Himself on His adversaries. The sword will devour till it glut itself with slaughter; it will drink

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[1] Jer. xlvi. 1-12. [2] *Rosenmüller.*

[3] Or, corslets. [4] They were the heavy armed soldiers.

[5] Men of Lud, not of Lydia in Asia Minor. The Ludim were an African people, Gen. x. 22; they were the light armed troops.

up their blood. For the Lord Jehovah of hosts will offer up a sacrifice to His righteous indignation, in the north, by the river Euphrates.

Go up from thy land to Gilead, and fetch balm, O virgin daughter of Egypt! But in vain heapest thou up cures;[1] there is no healing[2] for thee! The nations have heard of thy shame, and the cry of mocking against thee has filled the earth. For warrior ran against warrior in their eager flight, and both fell together!

The defeat of Necho, in spite of his trusted Greek mercenaries,[3] took place in the year B.C. 606, and seems to have resulted in his hasty retreat to Egypt. Nabopolassar was now old, and success had transformed him from a rebel, whom all men were expected to denounce, to a great king, whom all should honour. Fortunately for his new empire, his eldest son, Nebuchadnezzar, "Nebo protect the crown,"[4] was admirably fitted to maintain and extend it. Hereafter he was to be pre-eminently *the* king of Babylon, for the reign of his father from B.C. 625 to B.C. 604 only laid the foundation of the Chaldean supremacy, and it fell under the attack of Cyrus within twenty-four years, at the most, after Nebuchadnezzar's death in B.C. 562,[5] when he had reigned forty-two or forty-four years. The able son of an able father, he threw himself into the struggle with Egypt with all the vigour of early manhood, and soon gained so great a renown that, in after ages, even the Greeks had

[1] Lit., "medicines." [2] Lit., "plasters."

[3] Lenormant, *Hist. Ancienne*, vol. ii. p. 393.

[4] The name is variously spelt, but it seems better to retain the orthography of the A. V.

[5] Schrader. In the art. *Nebucadnezar*, in *Riehm*, Schrader makes the reign of that prince forty-two years. In his article *Chaldæa*, in the same *Encyc.* he makes it forty-four years, putting his death-year in the one case as B.C. 562, in the other as B.C. 560.

heard of him as almost like their own Hercules, in his valour and great deeds.[1] To Jeremiah he seemed like a lion coming up from the thickets of Jordan,[2] breaking the bones of his prey,[3] or like an eagle swooping down on it.[4] Ezekiel compares him to a great eagle, with vast wings of mighty sweep, full of feathers of many colours—the various nations under his banners, and the splendour of his great captains—tearing the branches from the cedars of Lebanon, and breaking off their twigs.[5] Such terror of his fierce warriors filled all lands, that even a few of their wounded men were said to be more feared than an army of other soldiers.[6] Sweeping on resistlessly, they made Babylon "the hammer of the whole earth;"[7] a dragon swallowing up the nations.[8]

NEBUCHADNEZZAR. From a black Cameo preserved in the Berlin Museum. The likeness is surrounded by an inscription in cuneiform characters, as follows: "To Merodach, his master, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, for the preservation of his life (by the god), has caused this to be made." The Cameo is thought by the German Assyriologists to represent the Nebuchadnezzar of the Bible.

To reach Carchemish, Nebuchadnezzar had to march 500 miles to the north-west, along the valley of the Euphrates. There the forces of Necho, composed of Egyptians, Libyans, Greeks, and auxiliaries from tributary provinces, were ignominiously swept away; only the wreck of the army reaching Egypt, closely pursued as they fled along the coast of Palestine, to the Nile. All Syria and Palestine was, thus, lost,[9] and passed into the

[1] *Strabo*, XV. i. 6. Jos., *Ant.*, X. xi. 1 quotes Megasthenes as using this comparison.
[2] Jer. xlix. 19; xxv. 38.
[3] Jer. l. 17.
[4] Jer. xlviii. 40; xlix. 22.
[5] Ezek. xvii. 3, 4, 7.
[6] Jer. xxxvii. 10.
[7] Jer. l. 23.
[8] Jer. li. 34.
[9] Jos., *Ant.*, X. vi. 1.

hands of Babylon, now the heir of Assyria. Among others, Jehoiakim had furnished a contingent to Necho, and from this, and the fighting men supplied by other petty kings, numerous prisoners were made. But Jehoiakim and the rest of Necho's vassals were themselves to escape for the time. The death of Nabopolassar, at Babylon, abruptly checked the triumphant course of the Chaldeans, so that they had to content themselves with retiring, for the moment, with their prisoners and booty; the captives led away from Judah forming the earliest of their countrymen taken to Babylon—the advanced guard, as it proved, of the whole of their nation, hereafter to settle with them as exiles on the banks of the Euphrates.

An invasion of Egypt itself had been intended, but news of his father's death having reached Nebuchadnezzar before he had crossed its frontier, he hurried back to Babylon to secure the crown, taking the short route across the desert, attended by only a light escort, to save time, and thus reaching his capital with unexpected speed.[1] The generals, meanwhile, brought back more leisurely the train of Jewish, Phenician, Syrian and Egyptian prisoners, and the vast accumulation of spoil, by the longer northern route.[2]

On arriving at Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar found everything quiet. The priests had kept the throne safely for him, as the legitimate heir. He had only to appear, and assume the crown. His reign of over forty years from this date[3] comprised more than half the duration, and all the glory, of the Babylonian empire; but, unfortunately, no inscriptions remain to describe his conquests to us,

[1] Berosus, see Jos., *Ant.*, X. xi. 1.
[2] Berosus, quoted by Eusebius in his *Chronicles*.
[3] B.C. 605–562 (43 years). *Keil.*

though from other sources we know how widely he spread the terror of his arms.

The hereditary ambition of the Assyrian kings to become masters of Egypt, passed to Nebuchadnezzar and made him a constant terror to the Pharaohs. They had, in former times, tried to shelter themselves behind the Syrian states; but after the fall of Damascus and Samaria, their greatest hope had been to play the part of conquerors in Asia, during the weakness of Nineveh, and thus protect themselves at home by advancing the frontier of their empire. The defeat at Carchemish, however, had overthrown this dream. But, fortunately for Necho, this disaster had happened on the Euphrates, and thus left him time to recover. He belonged to a brave race, who had fought for a hundred years to gain the crown of Egypt, and he would not resign it without a hard struggle. Refitting his fleet and reorganizing his army, he waited an opportunity to try his fortune once more, counting on his skill in stirring up the Jews and Phenicians to support him.

Since the miseries they had endured from Assyria, the Phenicians had cherished a profound hatred of rulers from the East, and this was largely shared by the various neighbouring states—Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Judah. Jehoiakim had reigned three years, and was beginning his fourth year at the time of the Egyptian defeat,[1] and near its end at the accession of Nebuchadnezzar.[2] The war, suspended by Nabopolassar's death, was renewed with the opening of the next military season; for only part

[1] The date of the defeat at Carchemish is one of the points on which all seem to agree. Bertheau, Keil, Ebers, and Schrader alike, give the close of B.C. 606 or beginning of B.C. 605.

[2] Jer. xxv. 1; xlvi. 2.

of the year was then thought available for campaigns.[1] Having secured the throne, Nebuchadnezzar again set out for Palestine, at the close of the fourth year of Jehoiakim; his approach throwing Judah and all the neighbouring countries into the utmost consternation, for Necho had skilfully played upon their hatred of the foreigner, and kept them from doing him homage. Jeremiah, however, still foresaw that the Chaldean power was irresistible, and strove to bring his countrymen to a willing submission, as the only means of preserving the State. Even human sagacity might have taught them, indeed, that resistance would lead to deportation; but it was further revealed to Jeremiah, that the captivity to follow would last seventy years, or two generations of men. Knowing this, his efforts to influence his fellow-countrymen for their own good were unceasing. One appeal to them followed another. In the first of these, he thus speaks.

From the thirteenth year of Josiah,[2] the son of Amon, king of Judah, to this day, these three and twenty years, the word of Jehovah has come to me, and I have spoken it to you—all ye people of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem—early and late, but ye have not hearkened. Jehovah has also sent to you all his servants, the prophets, earnestly and continually. But ye have not hearkened or bent your ear, to hear their message, which was this: "Turn ye, every one from his evil way and from the wickedness of your doings, and then ye shall dwell for ever and ever in the land which Jehovah gave to you and to your fathers. And go not after other gods, to serve and worship them, so that ye may not provoke Me to anger through the works of your hands, and cause Me to do you harm." But ye have not hearkened to Me, says Jehovah; as if ye wished to provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands, to your own hurt.

Therefore,[3] thus says Jehovah of hosts: Because ye have not heard My words, behold! I will send for and fetch all the races

[1] 2 Sam. xi. 1. [2] Jer. xxv. 1–7. [3] Jer. xxv. 7–11–14.

of the north, says Jehovah, and I will send to Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them all against this land and its inhabitants, and against all the nations that are round about it, and give them up to utter destruction,[1] and make them an astonishment and a hissing, and a perpetual desert. And I will destroy from them the voice of mirth and gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride; the sound of the mill, and the light of the lamp.[2] And the whole land will become a desolation and an astonishment. And these nations shall serve the king of Babylon SEVENTY YEARS.[3]

Babylon, itself, the instrument of God's wrath, will not, however, escape.

But when seventy years are full I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, saith Jehovah, for their inquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it a perpetual desert. And I will bring on that land all My words that I have pronounced against it; all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah has prophesied against all the nations.[4] For many nations and great

[1] Lit., will "bann them," *i.e.* devote them to destruction.

[2] See vol. iv. p. 124. Burton's *Inner Life of Syria*, vol. i. p. 264.

[3] From the fourth year of Jehoiakim, B.C. 606, to the first year of the separate reign of Cyrus, B.C. 536, was 70 years. It is computed thus: Nebuchadnezzar reigned 43 years, his son Evil Merodach 2 years, Neriglissar 4 years, Labrosoarchad 9 months, Nabonad 17 years = 66 years and 9 months. Add to this a year from Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion of Palestine to the death of his father and his own accession, and the two years reign of Darius the Mede (Cyaxares) over Babylon, and we have 69¾ years. *Keil.*

[4] Hitzig, Graf, Naegelsbach, Ewald, and Dr. Payne Smith omit the words, verse 12, "the king of Babylon," and "the land of the Chaldeans," to the end of 15th verse. They think it inconceivable that Jeremiah should at this period have openly named Babylon as doomed, since it would at once have infuriated Nebuchadnezzar and weakened the force of the prophet's appeals to his own people. But Keil, De Wette, Sachs, and Eichhorn, amongst others, retain them. The edition of the Sept. published by the Christian Knowledge Society omits the passage, but Stier and Theile's edition retains it both in the Greek and in the Vulgate.

kings will make them their servants, and I will punish them, according to their doings and the work of their hands.[1]

The solemnity of the judgment impending on Judah is intensified by the recital of those about to fall on other nations.

For thus says the Lord Jehovah of Israel to me,[2] Take this cup of the wine of My wrath out of My hand, and give it to all the nations to whom I send thee, to drink. That they may drink it, and reel, and become demented, before the sword I am about to send on them.

And I took the cup from Jehovah's hand, and let all the nations drink it to whom Jehovah sent me, [3] Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, and her kings and princes—to make them a desolation and an astonishment, and a hissing and a curse, forthwith.[4] Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, his servants, his princes, and all his people, and all the nations tributary to him, [5] and all the kings of the land of Uz,[6] and of the land of the Philistines, Askelon, Gaza, Ekron, and the remnant left in Ashdod; [7] Edom,

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[1] The Vatican text puts the closing words of the thirteenth verse in uncial letters, as a title to what follows: thus, "THE (WORDS) WHICH JEREMIAH PROPHESIED AGAINST THE NATIONS—ELAM." The Vatican text, the Codex C. (of less value) and the Alexandrine Codex (not the Alexandrine text) omit ver. 14. Elam comes first, in the Sept., among the nations denounced.

[2] Jer. xxv. 15-26.

[3] The prophet must, necessarily, be recounting the details of a vision.

[4] *Ewald.* The Alexandrine Codex. The Vatican text and the Codex C. omit "as it is this day."

[5] A. V. "mingled people," here, and in ver. 24. It seems to mean the tribes of different race from the Egyptian, but under its sway. Cheyne and Driver translate it "mercenaries." Ewald renders it substantially as in the text. He is supported by Keil.

[6] Vol. i. p. 262.

[7] Ashdod had been besieged for twenty-nine years by Psammetichus, father of Necho—there would, therefore, be only a remnant of its people left. Gath is omitted from the list of Philistine cities, perhaps as no longer independent.

Moab, and the B'nai Ammon; and all the kings of Tyre, and of Sidon, and of the lands[1] beyond the Sea; Dedan[2] and Tema[3] and Buz,[4] and all with the corners of their hair shorn away.[5] And all the kings of (Northern) Arabia and of the tribes of various races that dwell in the desert. And all the kings of Zimri,[6] all the kings of Elam,[7] and all the kings of the Medes, and all the kings of the North, far and near, one and all, and all the kingdoms of the world, on the face of the earth.[8] Last of all, the king of Sheshach will drink the cup of God's wrath.[9]

Say therefore to them,[10] thus says Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel; Drink and be drunken, and vomit, and fall, and rise no more, before the sword which I will send among you. And

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[1] Or, coasts, or islands.

[2] Vol. i. p. 243.

[3] An Arab tribe in North Arabia. Job vi. 19. Isa. xxi. 14. Taima, in Arabic, means "Desert." *Kneucker.*

[4] An Arab tribe, in the desert, east of Edom. *Kneucker.*

[5] Jer. ix. 26; xlix. 28, 32. See page 210.

[6] Seemingly an Arab people between Arabia and Elam.

[7] Elam was now becoming Persia.

[8] This is only a general expression, and not to be taken literally. See Dan. ii. 38; iv. 22. It means a vast empire, not an absolutely universal one.

[9] In Jer. li. 41, Sheshach is used for Babylon. Jerome notices this, perhaps through a hint from his Jewish teacher, as to the old tradition. According to this, the word is a cipher formed after the rule called by the Jews Athbasch, by which the letters of the alphabet are used backwards, the last standing for the first, and so, throughout. See Buxtorff, *Lex*, art. *Athbasch.* A similar example is found in Jer. li. 1, where Casdim is expressed by the words Laib Kamai. Keil repudiates the idea that it is used to prevent the name of Babel appearing, and thinks its object is obtain a striking meaning. This, he makes, "a sinking"—to indicate that Babylon will fall and not rise again. For various renderings see *Ges. Thes.*, p. 1486. The consonants Sh Sh Ch on the principle of Athbasch stand for B B L, the consonants of Babel. On the same principle L B K M Y stand for C(ₐ) S D I M = Chaldeans. The origin of this secret system is of unknown antiquity among the Jews. See *Leyrer*, in Herzog's *Ency.*, vol. xiv. pp. 1–20.

[10] Jer. xxv. 27–29.

if they refuse to take the cup from your hand, say to them, Thus says Jehovah of hosts, Drink it you shall! For, lo, I will begin with the city called by My name, in this outpouring of evil, and will *you* be left unpunished? Ye shall not! for I shall summon the sword to do its work on all the inhabitants of the earth, says Jehovah of hosts!

Therefore, speak all these words to them,[1] and say: Jehovah will roar (like a lion) from (heaven) on high, and utter His voice[2] from His holy habitation. He will roar with a mighty voice against His own land:[3] He shall shout[4] like him that treads the wine press, against all the inhabitants of the earth. The mighty sound will roll like a storm, even to the ends of the earth; for Jehovah has a controversy with the nations; He will reckon as a judge with all flesh; the godless will He give to the sword! So says Jehovah!

Thus says Jehovah of hosts, Behold trouble will pass on from nation to nation; a mighty storm of wrath will pour down from the farthest ends of the earth. And those slain by Jehovah will lie, on that day, from one end of the earth to the other; they will not be lamented, nor gathered up, nor buried; they will be left like manure on the face of the earth! Howl ye shepherds![5] Cry aloud! Ye lordliest of the flock strew yourselves with ashes! For your days for being slaughtered are fulfilled; I will dash you to pieces like a costly vessel. And there shall be no flight for the shepherds; no escape for the lordliest of the flocks! Hark! the cry of the shepherds, the wail of the lordliest of the flock; for Jehovah has laid waste their pasture, and the peaceful meadows are destroyed before the burning wrath of Jehovah! Like a lion, He has forsaken his covert; yea, their land has become a desert, before the fierceness of the Destroyer; before the fierceness of His wrath!

The advance of Nebuchadnezzar, with a great army of

[1] Jer. xxv. 30-38.

[2] "Thunder." *Ewald.*

[3] From the verb for "to sit," "to rest," = peace, habitation, dwelling. Here, Judah.

[4] The cry of one rushing on to war.

[5] Kings.

Chaldeans and Syrians,[1] spread terror, as has been said, on all sides. The population of the villages and country towns flocked to Jerusalem;[2] even friendly shepherd tribes from the wilderness pastures hurrying to the protection of its walls. Among others, came the B'nai Rechab, a half Arab sect of Jewish Puritans, who had risen in the days of Elijah, as an indirect result of his life and influence.[3] Descended from a branch of the tribe of Kenites,[4] who came into Palestine with the Israelites, and had zealously adopted the Hebrew faith, they had retained their nomadic habits, wandering over the open spaces in the land, especially those of the northern districts.[5] One of their chiefs, Jonadab, the colleague of Jehu in his violent suppression of idolatry, under the dynasty of Ahab, had modelled his clan after the Nazarite ideal,[6] to insure its more thorough separation from the wickedness of the times; taking the idea, apparently, from the example of Elijah and that of the prophets. Following his recommendations, they henceforth abjured wine, and made a vow neither to build houses, nor till the ground, nor plant vineyards; repudiating all that was associated with a settled life, and withdrawing permanently to their tents on the lonely pastures, far from the haunts of men. The social corruption of the Northern Kingdom had grown terrible under the House of Ahab. Phenician idolatry, luxury, and vice, had spread through the land. Jonadab

[1] Jer. xxxv. 11.
[2] Jer. xxxvi. 9.
[3] See vol. ii. p. 108; vol. iv. pp. 60, 144.
[4] 1 Chron. ii. 55.
[5] The "shearing-house," 2 Kings x. 14, was probably a spot connected with the flocks of the wandering Kenites. One branch of the tribe roamed over the uplands of the Negeb in the south. 1 Sam. xv. 6; xxvii. 10; xxx. 29. Another branch had their tents near Kadesh in Naphtali, in the north. Jud. iv. 11, 17; v. 24.
[6] Amos ii. 11.

resolved at once to save his people from contamination, and make their collective life a protest against the special sins of the day.

Streaming down from the North on the threatened advance of Nebuchadnezzar, an encampment of these zealous Puritans of Judaism now sought shelter in Jerusalem; pitching their tents in some open space in the city, and living apart from the general population,[1] under their sheik Jaazaniah—"he whom Jehovah hears."[2]

The fidelity of such rough sons of the desert to the ancient faith of Israel, marked them out amidst the common crowd, and must have made them objects of general interest. They must especially have excited the sympathy of those, like themselves, still true to the old religion; cheering them by a living proof that amidst the wide decay of morals, some remained faithful to the God of their fathers. Fidelity so striking was, indeed, fitted to read a lesson to the community at large, and it was used for this purpose by Jeremiah. Acting on a prophetic impulse, he brought their sheik and all the encampment, to a chamber within the temple precincts—that of the sons or disciples of Hanan, an unknown prophet—over the quarters of Maaseiah, the overseer of the guards of the temple gates, and next the room in which the chief men were wont to assemble for public business. Here, he caused large bowls of wine to be set before them, such as were placed before guests at a feast, and invited them to fill their cups from them, and drink. The proposal, made in mock earnest, must have been seen in that light, for otherwise nothing could

[1] Jer. xxxv. 2.

[2] The other names given of members of the tribe, are Jeremiah, "he whom Jehovah establishes"; and Habaziniah, perhaps, "the lamp of Jehovah."

have been in worse taste. Of course all, at once, and without hesitation, declined. They had vowed, they said, to obey the commands of their forefather Jonadab, and would be true to their pledge.[1] They could not think of touching wine.

Jeremiah had known that this would be their answer, and forthwith took advantage of it to point an address to the citizens. Turning to the crowd around, in the temple courts, he announced[2] that he had been sent by Jehovah to them and to the men of Judah, to say,—

Will ye receive no instruction to hear My words, says Jehovah? The words of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, which he commanded his sons, "that they should drink no wine," are obeyed; they drink none to this day, but still obey the command of their father, given two hundred and fifty years ago. But I, Jehovah, your God, have spoken to you continually, with earnest zeal, till now, but you have not listened to Me! I have sent to you all My servants the prophets, unceasingly saying by them, "Turn ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and walk no longer after other gods, to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers." But ye have not inclined your ear or obeyed Me. The sons of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, have obeyed the command of their father, but this people have not obeyed Me!

Therefore, thus says Jehovah, the God of hosts, the God of Israel. Behold, I bring on Judah and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, all the evil I have spoken against them, because I have spoken to them but they have not heard; I have called to them, but they have not answered!

Then turning to the Rechabites, standing by, the prophet continued,—

Thus says Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: Because ye have obeyed the command of your father Jonadab, and have kept

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[1] Jer. xxxv. 1-11. [2] Jer. xxv. 12-19.

all his precepts, and done all that he enjoined on you—therefore, thus says Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not, for ever, want a man to stand before Me.

Counterparts of this singular community, thus honoured by God, have occurred at different times, illustrating the tendency to similar asceticism in the East. The ancient Nabatheans neither sowed seed, nor planted fruit-trees, nor built houses,[1] and enforced these usages by death for their transgression. The Wahabees, who rose in the second half of last century, in Arabia, used neither wine, opium nor tobacco, and proscribed luxury and self-indulgence of every kind. The zealots of Islamism, their success was amazing. They soon formed an army of 100,000 men, ready to spread their opinions by the sword, and were only subdued, in the first quarter of this century,[2] after desperate efforts, by Mahomed Ali and his son Ibrahim Pasha.

The assurance that the Rechabites would never want a man "to stand before God," has been strangely fulfilled. The phrase seemingly points to the adoption of members of the tribe into the priestly office, to "stand before God," like the sons of Levi.[3] Their strictness as Nazarites, facilitated this advancement, for even so late as St. James the Just, Nazarites, by a singular exception, were permitted to enter the most sacred parts of the temple.[4] In keeping with this, the heading of the seventy-first Psalm, in the Septuagint, speaks of the sons of Jonadab as the first who were carried off to Babylon, and intimates that this Psalm had been commonly sung by them in the

[1] *Diod. Sic.*, xix. 94.

[2] Brockhaus, *Lexicon*, vol. xv. pp. 270 ff.

[3] Deut. x. 8; xviii. 5, 7. Gen. xviii. 22. Jud. xx. 28. Ps. cxxxiv. 1. Jer. xv. 19.

[4] Eusebius, *Hist. Ecc.*, Bk. ii. ch. 23.

temple service.[1] A "son of Rechab" is named among the restorers of Jerusalem, after the Return,[2] and in the genealogies of the Chronicles,[3] which were drawn up at a very late period, a community of Rechabites, living at Jabez, are spoken of as scribes, that is, as occupied with the writing and study of the Law—an occupation in earlier times almost wholly engrossed by Levites.[4] Centuries later, Eusebius brings their name before us in a striking connection. While the mob were stoning James the Just, he tells us, "one of the priests, of the sons of Rechab, a son of the Rechabites spoken of by Jeremiah the prophet, cried out, 'Stop—what are you doing? He is praying for you,'"[5] so that, even in that day, a priestly order of Rechabites still survived.

But still later, notices of this people remain, to startle us by the echo their history gives of the words of Jeremiah. Benjamin of Tudela, who travelled in the East in the twelfth century, speaks of a community of Jews whom he met, who called themselves Rechabites. They tilled the ground, and kept flocks and herds, but abstained from wine and flesh, and gave tithes to Rabbis, who studied the Law and led the public wailings for Jerusalem. They numbered 100,000, and lived under a

[1] This is implied. The words are: "By David; *a Psalm sung* by the sons of Jonadab: even the first that were taken captive."

[2] Neh. iii. 14. [3] 1 Chron. ii. 55.

[4] The other classes named in 1 Chron. ii. 55, have been translated by the Vulgate as "singers," "trumpet blowers," and "dwellers in tents." But later lexicographers do not support this rendering. Wellhausen translates Tirathites as "trumpeters," "blowers of the sacred trumpets;" Shimeathites, as "men of the tradition;" and Suchathites, as "dwellers in tents."

[5] Eusebius, *Hist. Ecc.*, Bk. ii. ch. 23. He is quoting from Hegesippus, who was alive in the early part of the second century of our era.

prince of their own, who traced his descent from David.[1] Even in our own day, moreover, Dr. Wolff, the missionary traveller, met a tribe near Senaa, in Arabia, who claim to be the Rechabites. In answer to a question as to their origin, one of them replied by reading from an Arabic Bible the words of Jeremiah, describing the Rechabites of his day,[2] and added that they numbered 60,000.[3] Still more recently, Signor Pierotti, near the south-east end of the Dead Sea, met a tribe who called themselves Rechabites, had a Hebrew Bible, prayed at the tomb of a Jewish Rabbi, and spoke of themselves exactly as the Rechabites in Arabia had spoken to Wolff a generation before.[4]

[1] *Benjamin of Tudela.* Asher's edit., pp. 112–114.
[2] Jer. xxxv. 5–11. [3] *Wolff's Journal*, 1829, vol. ii. p. 334.
[4] *Transactions of the British Association*, 1862.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE PROPHET HABAKKUK.

WHILE Jeremiah was contending with the evil around him, other prophets were not silent. If Judah were to fall, its ruin would come in spite of efforts to save it, unique in the history of the world. We look in vain in the history of Greece or Rome, or any people of the ancient or modern world, for such a phenomenon as the preachers who, under the name of prophets, rose during the decay of the two Hebrew kingdoms. Amidst the growing darkness their voices are heard unceasingly calling men back to the light; rebuking sin with a fearless courage; presenting the mighty truths of righteousness and judgment to their countrymen with a force and variety of language which makes their words for ever weighty; realizing the existence and living interest of God in all the concerns of nations and individuals as it never has been done by any other religious order, and anticipating with sublime trust the final victory of truth, and the ultimate emergence of a deathless kingdom of righteousness and peace.

Among these the prophet Habakkuk took a foremost place, though only a brief illustration of his teaching survives. His name, as Luther well puts it, speaks of

one "who took his nation to his heart,[1] comforted it and held it up, as one embraces and presses to his bosom a poor weeping child, calming and consoling it with good hope—if God so will." He seems to have been a Levite, and to have taken part, at the temple service, in the chanting of psalms written by himself.[2] Like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, he thus united the priestly and prophetic offices, at least in a measure. The prophecies bearing his name seem to have been uttered about the year B.C. 604,[3] when Necho had been defeated at Carchemish, and the advance of Nebuchadnezzar on Palestine, to drive the Egyptians finally out of Asia, was imminent. He dwells with profound alarm on the terrors of his approach, realizing the miseries he would inflict on the land, but is too absorbed by higher thoughts to do more than allude in general terms to the historical facts of the hour. His soul is engrossed with the weighty reflections suggested by things around, more than with outward affairs. The deepening wickedness of the age, its contrast of prosperous guilt and suffering worth, had raised doubts and perplexities in his soul, as in the minds of others, as to the ways of God with man. To solve the problem for his fellow-countrymen still faithful to Jehovah, is the great aim of his book. The old doctrine of rewards and punishments in this life he finds untenable, and, first of all the sacred writers, realizes the great truth of New Testament doctrine, that the just shall live by his faith, not by his works alone.[4] In style and genius he ranks among the highest of the Hebrew poets, though his strains are no longer those of the sacred lyrics of earlier

[1] It means "embracing," or "the embracer."
[2] Hab. iii. 1–19. Inscription to Bel and the Dragon.
[3] Schrader, *Bib. Lex.*
[4] Hab. ii. 4, quoted in Rom. i. 17; Gal. iii. 11; Heb. x. 38.

days, but swell, as it were, to a trumpet blast, under the mightier impulse of stormy times.

The book opens with a troubled but confiding cry to Jehovah for light, as to His ways with men. How is it that violence and wickedness prosper, while the innocent poor and the godly were wronged and oppressed?

How long, O Jehovah,[1] shall I cry and Thou wilt not hear? How long shall I cry to Thee for the violence of men, and Thou wilt not help? Why lettest Thou me see iniquity? Why dost Thou Thyself look upon undeserved sorrow? Violence and wrong are before me; strife is around; contention lifts itself up. Through all this the Law[2] has lost its power,[3] and justice never prevails.[4] For the wicked hem round the upright and keep them back from their due, and only perverted justice is decreed.[5]

The answer, solving the prophet's difficulties, is given by Jehovah. The wicked may have flourished for a time, but their day is coming! The Chaldeans will execute the Divine judgments on them.

Look among the nations,[6] and take notice, and wonder with great astonishment! For a work is being wrought in your days, which ye would not credit if it were told you!

For lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, the fierce and impetuous nation, who push to far countries of the earth, to seize lands that are not theirs! They are dreadful and terrible; their ruler acts as it pleases himself; he follows his own counsel alone.[7] Their

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[1] Hab. i. 2–4. [2] The Torah.

[3] Lit., is "benumbed," "grown cold." It should be the life of the individual and the nation, but it is paralysed.

[4] Lit., "comes forward" (to the front).

[5] Lit., "goes forth"—is promulgated by the judges.

[6] Hab. i. 5–11.

[7] Slightly paraphrased to give the sense.

horses are swifter than leopards,[1] fiercer than evening wolves;[2] their cavalry[3] bound onwards, coming from afar; they fly like the eagle,[4] hastening to devour. They come, all of them, only as fierce oppressors; the striving of their faces is forwards;[5] they gather captives like the sand for number; they scoff at kings and hold princes in scorn; they laugh at all strongholds, and cast up mounds of earth against them and take them! Their king rushes by them like a storm, and passes on resistless, and becomes guilty; for this, his great might, is made his god.[6]

The thought that even the Chaldeans are powerless before Jehovah, calms the mind of the prophet, as the miseries they will inflict on his people rise before him. They, too, will be judged. God cannot permit their violence to go unvisited. They are only the instruments of Providence, unconsciously fulfilling its purpose. That accomplished, they will feel the hand of the Almighty. Judah will not utterly perish.

Art Thou not from everlasting,[7] O Jehovah, my God, my Holy

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[1] The Hebrew word is *namair;* the Assyrian word for leopard is *nimru*, and the local name in Mesopotamia is *nimer*. Houghton, *Trans. Bib. Arch. Soc.*, vol. v. p. 326.

[2] See page 170.

[3] In contrast to their chariot horses. For a description of the war horses of the Assyrian sculptures, see Layard's *Nineveh and Babylon*, vol. ii. p. 360.

[4] In *Riehm*, p. 27, it is suggested that an eagle-like vulture is meant.

[5] The word translated "east wind," is lit., "towards the east," but "the east" meant, originally, "the side before one," and seems to have that sense here.

[6] Ewald: "His mind is lifted up and passes due bounds, and he becomes guilty." The reading in the text is that of Steiner Keil, Klein, Delitzsch, and Pusey.

[7] Hab. i. 12-17.

One! We shall not die![1] O Jehovah, Thou hast appointed them—the Chaldeans—to execute Thy judgments. O Rock[2] of Israel, Thou hast ordained them to chastise Thy people!

Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on wrong. Why, then, lookest Thou calmly on these robber[3] Chaldeans? Why art Thou silent when the Wicked One swallows up men more righteous than he? Why makest Thou men as the helpless fish of the sea, or as the creeping things that have no ruler? These plunderers pull out all men with the hook, draw them in with their casting-net, and gather them with their draw-net,[4] and rejoice and are glad of it. Therefore they make offerings to their casting-net, and burn incense to their draw-net, for through them their catch is rich and their food dainty.[5] Shall he, then, empty out his net, and for ever slaughter the nations without pity?

This, assuredly, cannot be, since Jehovah reigns! The prophet feels that he must rise above such doubts and half-despairings, and trust to receive a sufficient answer to his perplexities. Lonely heights seemed then, as now, fitter than the haunts of men for communion with God; the heavens, the dwelling of the Eternal, opening from their lonely tops, and the ear catching the voice of God, without distraction, amidst their silence. Habakkuk, therefore, in thought, ascends some such watch tower of the soul, and waits there amidst the stillness, till God deigned to reveal Himself and shed light on his darkness.

[1] *Steiner. Keil. Eichhorn.* Ewald and some others adopt the reading, "Thou shalt not die," from the Masoretic notes, which speak of "We shall not die," as "a correction of the Scribes." There are eighteen of these, but they are only suggested in the Hebrew notes, not introduced into the text, and represent only so many Jewish traditions.

[2] Deut. xxxii. 15, 18; xxxvii. 4. *Keil. Steiner. Ewald. Heb. text.*

[3] *Steiner.*

[4] Drake, art. *Fish, Dict. of the Bible.*

[5] Lit., "fat."

I will take my stand upon my place of watch,[1] and set myself on the tower, and fix my thoughts to hear what Jehovah will say to me; what answer I shall receive to my appeal![2]

Then Jehovah answered me by a vision, and said, "Write out the vision, and make it plain on the tablets, that man may read it quickly.[3] For it has respect to a set time, still future, and hastens towards the end, and will not deceive. Though it tarry, wait for it, for come it will, and will not miss its time."

The oracle itself now begins.

Behold![4] the soul of the Chaldean king is lifted up; it is not humble[5] in him. But the righteous shall live by his faith.[6] Still more; the proud man, the Chaldean king, drunk with ambition, is fierce, like one drunk with wine, and rests not in his own land, but opens his jaws like hell, and is like death, and is not satisfied, but gathers to himself all the nations, and draws to him all the peoples.

Will not all these nations and peoples take up the song against him, the song of reproach and derision, and say:

Woe to him that heaps up what is not his! How long will he go unpunished? Woe to him that loads himself, like a usurer, with the goods of many lands—goods taken in pledge—thick clay, call them—that must be restored. Shall not thy creditors sud-

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[1] **Hab. ii. 1-3.** [2] *Steiner.*

[3] Lit., "that he that readeth it may run over it quickly."

[4] **Hab. ii. 4-8.** [5] Does not flow evenly. *Steiner.*

[6] The word here translated "faith," is rendered elsewhere "truth," "faithfulness." See Deut. xxxii. 4, a God of *truth;* so Ps. xxxiii. 4; Jer. v. 1, 3; 1 Sam. xxvi. 23. His *faithfulness;* so Ps. xxxvi. 5; xl. 10; Lam. iii. 23. For the full meaning of the word see Rom. i. 17; Gal. iii. 11; Heb. x. 38.

[7] The figure is taken from a heartless extortioner, who carries off the goods of his debtors in pledge. The word for pledges is *Abtit,* and this, divided in two, means thick clay, or masses, clods of clay. No doubt a verbal play was intended.

denly rise to sting thee;[1] thy tormentors roughly wake thee up, and make thee their prey? Because thou hast plundered many nations, all the remnants of them will plunder thee, for the blood of men thou hast shed, and for thy violence to land and city and all their inhabitants!

Woe to him[2]—the Chaldean—who gathers unjust gain for his house, to set his nest on high, to save himself from the stroke of fate.[3] Thou hast devised only shame to thy House; thou hast destroyed many nations, and sinned away thine own life![4] For the stone shall cry against thee, out of the wall, and the cross-beam out of the timber-work will answer it![5]

Woe to him[6] that builds up his city with the blood of men, his slaves and captives from many lands, and founds his stronghold on iniquity! Behold! Jehovah of hosts has decreed that these nations of forced workers shall labour only for what is to perish with fire, through His judgments, and weary themselves for what will come to nothing![7] For widely as the waters cover the basin of the sea, shall the earth be filled with the knowledge of the majesty of Jehovah, in His destruction of Babylon!

Woe to him[8]—the Chaldean—who causes his neighbour to drink, pouring out his glowing cup to him,[9] and makes him drunk—to look on his shame! Thou, thyself, wilt be filled with shame, in place of thy present glory. "Drink thou, also," it will be said to thee, "and show thy nakedness!" For the cup in the right hand of Jehovah will turn itself to thee, and foul vomit shall

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[1] The figure is from the bite or sting of a serpent.

[2] Hab. ii. 9-11.

[3] Lit., "grasp of evil."

[4] Brought on thine own future destruction.

[5] This paragraph is applied by Steiner and Ewald to Jehoiakim, but their reasons are unsatisfactory, and the interruption to the prophecy against Chaldea is improbable.

[6] Hab. ii. 12-14.

[7] *Eichhorn. De Wette. Noyes. Ewald.*

[8] Hab. ii. 15-17.

[9] Lit., "thy wrath, or heat." It may mean the glow of the wine, as heating or intoxicating, or the secret enmity with which the Chaldean, under fair pretences, brought nations to drunken slavery, by ruinous alliance, etc.; or it may refer simply to the notorious drunkenness and revelling of Babylon.

cover thy glory![1] For violence like that done to Lebanon, in ruthlessly hewing down its woods, shall cover thine own land,[2] and the slaughter of its beasts, like that which thou wroughtest in Israel, shall make thee afraid.[3] Thy land shall be desolate, for the blood of men thou hast shed, and for the violence thou hast shown to town and country, and all their inhabitants.[4]

### The trust of the Chaldeans in their idols is vain.

What profit is the graven image,[5] when its maker has carved it? Or the molten image, which teaches but lies—that the maker of such dumb idols should trust in them?

Woe to him that says to the piece of wood, "Wake up!" and to the dead[6] stone, "Rouse thyself!" Can it teach? Behold it is plated over with gold and silver, and there is no breath in its midst!

But Jehovah dwells in His holy temple[7] in the heavens: let all the earth be silent before Him!

The prophet has now ended his predictions, and closes by a sublime prayer to God to preserve Judah, during the trials before her at the hands of the Chaldeans, and restore her when the term of her captivity is ended. He throws his supplication into the form of a psalm, to be sung in the temple to dithyrambic music; that is, to strains of the highest emotion.[8] Since God will assuredly visit His people in wrath, let Him still remember His mercy. He delivered them of old from Egypt; He can now deliver them from Babylon, when the seventy years of their captivity are ended.

[1] Or, "shame and disgrace will take the place of thy glory." *Ewald.*

[2] Lit., "cover thee."

[3] *Sept. Ewald*, virtually. *Cook. Targ. Pesh. Jerome.*

[4] *Eichhorn.*

[5] Hab. ii. 18-20.

[6] Lit., "dumb."

[7] Lit., "palace."

[8] *Shigionoth*, pl. of *Shiggion*, comes from the verb *Shagah*, "to reel about through drink." It occurs only one other time, in Ps. vii., title.

O Jehovah, I have heard Thy words against Judah and Babylon, and tremble! O Jehovah, revive[1] Thy work of mercy to Thy people, as the years roll their course; as the years pass make it known to us; in Thy just wrath remember mercy!

That He will do so is sure, from the remembrance of His former deeds to His people. Hereafter He will come from Sinai, His ancient resting-place, as He did of old.

Eloah comes from Teman,[2] and the Holy One from the mountains of Paran.[3] His brightness, as of the sun, covers the heavens, and the earth is filled with His glory.[4] Splendour, like the sun, appears; beams of light stream forth around Him,[5] the veil of His almighty power! Before Him goes the Pestilence; the burning Plague follows in His steps,[6] for He comes to judge His enemies. He stands, and the earth shakes beneath Him; He looks around, and the nations tremble. The everlasting mountains burst asunder; the world-old hills sink down.[7] He comes along His ancient paths[8]—the paths in which He marched from Sinai of old!

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[1] Lit., "let it come to life."

[2] In southern Idumea. It stands for Edom as a whole.

[3] Paran, the hills forming the eastern half of the upland wilderness of Et Tih. They are divided from Teman only by the low plain of the Arabah. The word "Selah" is thought by Hitzig to mean that the people bowed down at this point. Keil supposes it is equivalent to *Forte*, and introduced an outburst of trumpets, etc. Teman and Paran lay between Judah and Sinai, from which God is supposed to come, as of old. See Jud. v. 4, and Deut. xxxiii. 2, from which the verse is in effect borrowed. Sinai, to the Jew, was the ancient seat of the earthly majesty of God, as seen at the giving of the Law.

[4] Lit., "praise." [5] At His side.

[6] This seems a more strict parallel than "lightnings fly forth at His feet." *De Wette.* Ewald renders the words "burning Plague" by "flames of death."

Jud. v. 5. [8] He came of old from Sinai; so now.

The prophet sees Jehovah coming at the head of His people, from Egypt; His anger roused against the rivers and the sea which hinder their escape. He advances like a warrior, with His chariots and bow, against them, and they yield and open, to make a pathway for Israel.

I see the tents of Cushan[1] troubled; the tent coverings of the land of Midian tremble! Does Thy wrath burn against the streams, O Jehovah? or against the swelling waves of the sea—that Thou ridest on with Thy horses, Thy chariots of victory?[2] Thy bow is made bare and levelled;[3] Thine arrows are satiated—victory is won![4] The streams of water, fleeing back before Thee, tear open the earth; the mountains see Thee and tremble; the storm of waters pours on; the deep utters its voice in supplication to Thee, and lifts up its hands, to implore Thy grace! The sun and moon draw back into their habitation, at the light of Thy flashing arrows; at the shining of Thy glittering spear!

The prophet now describes the judgment of God on the nations, to bring about the deliverance of His people.

Thou marchest through the earth in wrath; Thou tramplest the nations under foot, like grain on the threshing floor,[5] in thine anger. Thou goest forth for the deliverance of Thy people; the deliverance of Thine anointed! Thou dashest in pieces Pharaoh, the head of the house of the wicked, laying bare the foundations of the deep,[6] to destroy him. Thou hast pierced through with their own spears the head of their princes,[7] who

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[1] Ethiopia, which extended over Arabia.

[2] Lit., "deliverance." The streams and the sea lay between Israel and liberty.

[3] *De Wette.*

[4] There are more than a hundred explanations of this very corrupt clause. I adopt the conjecture of De Wette.

[5] The verb refers to the threshing of grain by trampling it under the feet of cattle.

[6] A. V. "unto the neck"—a periphrasis, to mark the depth of the waters.

[7] *Ewald.* Leaders, *De Wette.* Hordes, *Keil.* Warriors, *Steiner*

rushed on like a whirlwind to scatter us, and rejoiced at the thought of devouring the helpless, as robbers bursting on their prey from their lurking place. Thou hast marched through the sea with Thine horses—through the heaped up walls of great waters.

This appearance of God, of old, to lead forth His people and judge their enemies, was the earnest of His return to deliver them from the impending captivity. Fear and trembling seized the prophet at the thought of the misery before his countrymen, but this passes into a peaceful joy in the sure anticipation of their ultimate deliverance.

When I heard that God would appear to punish the sins of my nation,[1] my body shuddered; my lips quivered at the sound of the Divine voice; terror[2] struck through my bones, my limbs trembled beneath me, lest I should not have strength to await the day of trouble, when the foe comes up against my people. For the fig-tree will not blossom, and there will be no fruit in the vines; the harvest of the olive will fail, and the fields yield no food; the flock will be gone from the fold, and there will be no beast in the stalls.[3] Yet, as for me, I will rejoice in Jehovah; I will be glad in the God of my salvation! For Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength, and makes my feet like the feet of the bounding hinds, and He makes me walk on my high places;[4] He lifts me up above fear and fills me with joyful confidence![5]

Jeremiah had enjoyed liberty of speech during the

[1] Hab. iii. 16. [2] Lit., "rottenness."

[3] The verbs are in the present, throughout, but this, in the sense of a prophetic vision of what will be in the time of the invasion.

[4] 2 Sam. ii. 18; xxii. 34. Ps. xviii. 33.

[5] The book closes with the note "To the chief singer; to be sung to the accompaniment of my stringed instruments." The prophet was not only a Levite, but also one of the temple musicians.

first years of Jehoiakim, though amidst much scorn and opposition. He was now, however, to find himself not only precluded, for a lengthened period, from appearing in public, but forced to seek personal safety in concealment. He had exercised his prophetical office for nearly quarter of a century, and must thus have been about forty-five years of age, having entered on his commission when a very young man. Difficulties had accumulated in his way in the last months. He still bore the marks of the bastinado, and he had been cramped in the five-holed stocks through an entire night. The people had even clamoured for his death. A change in his relations to them was necessary. He had to prepare for the worst.

The defeat of Egypt, at Carchemish, left Jehoiakim, for the moment, virtually free. Babylon was far off, Pharaoh was crippled, and the smaller states might be successfully resisted. It seemed as if Judah might once more aspire to independence. But this dream was short-lived. The army of Nebuchadnezzar was advancing. The neighing of its war horses might almost be heard from Dan, at the foot of Hermon; the noise of its camp seemed already to make the land tremble.[1] The summons of the conqueror to deliver up Jerusalem, on pain of its destruction, might be expected daily. Egypt, indeed, was profuse in its exhortations to resist, but was it able to help? In the approaching struggle between it and Nebuchadnezzar, Palestine was certain to be the battle-ground, as it had been under Hezekiah. Jehoiakim and his people were alike irresolute what course to take.

Jeremiah, and those around him, alone were clear and firm in their views. The doom pronounced on the land by God would inevitably visit it, unless warded off by

[1] Jer. viii. 16.

earnest and general repentance. Nothing else would prevent the deportation of Judah to Babylon; and, in any case, subjection to Nebuchadnezzar was at hand. All this had been urged again and again, but the people had turned a deaf ear to it. The prophet felt that, at any moment, they might turn against him and put him to death, or he might be slain, like the prophet Urijah, by royal order,[1] and, if so, his words would perish. He therefore determined to write out such of his addresses, from the opening of his ministry, as seemed specially to demand preservation.[2] In this purpose he could count on the help of Baruch—"the Blessed," a faithful friend, who clung to him in all his troubles, like Elisha to Elijah, or Timothy to St. Paul. He was a man of noble family—brother of Seraiah, who afterwards held high office under king Zedekiah [3]—and was specially skilled in the laborious art of manuscript writing, then, undoubtedly, a comparatively rare accomplishment. A roll, in all probability of prepared skin,[4] having therefore been procured, the prophet dictated to this trusty friend "all the words of Jehovah, which He had spoken to him," and he took them down, column by column, as uttered, till the whole had been written out.

The difficulty now was to have them read aloud, if,

[1] Jer. xxvi. 23. [2] Jer. xxxvi. 1 ff.

[3] Jer. li. 59. Bar. i. 1. Jos., *Ant.*, X. ix. 1.

[4] The manuscripts of the Hebrews seem to have been written on the skins of sheep or goats. Writing could be washed out from the material (Num. v. 23), and it could not be torn as papyrus, from Egypt, might have been, but had to be cut. Jer. xxxvi. 23. Parchment in the strict sense was of later invention than Jeremiah's time. The ancient Ionians used the skins of goats and sheep for their writings, and these were still the common material in many countries in the time of Herodotus (Bk. v. § 58). Herodotus lived B.C. 484–c. 400.

perchance, at last, his countrymen might prove more teachable than in the past. Jeremiah himself could not venture to go into the temple,[1] but there was no such animosity felt towards Baruch. The excitement and danger of the last few months, however, had unnerved even one so faithful. When asked to take the roll to the temple court, and read it before the crowd, he shrank from the peril. "Woe is me now," cried he, "for Jehovah has added fresh grief to the sorrow I have already. I am weary with sighing and find no rest!"[2] To take so prominent a part would ruin his worldly prospects, and might endanger his life. But Jeremiah would not hear of a refusal. Jehovah, he said, had spoken thus to him:

> Behold, what I built up I destroy, and what I planted I pluck up, and that is, the whole land! Thou seekest what is great for thyself; seek it not. For, lo, I bring evil on all flesh, saith Jehovah, but I give thee thy life for thy share, in all the places whither thou mayest go.

Consoled with this assurance, he at last consented to undertake the perilous duty.

An opportunity ere long offered itself for this last attempt to save the people in their own despite. The agony of fear pervading the land had led to a special fast being called[3] in the month of December, B.C. 604.[4] All the people were summoned to appear in Jerusalem, and implore God to avert the threatened calamity. Popular superstition still trusted in the temple as a

[1] Jer. xxxvi. 5. The words rendered "shut up" cannot here mean imprisoned. See ver. 19.

[2] Jer. xlv. 1–5.

[3] The only fast day prescribed in the Law was that of the Day of Atonement, in the 7th month (October).

[4] In the 9th month. Kislew = December Jer. xxxvi. 9.

Divine protection against any foe.[1] But this was not enough for their alarm. Priest and people, alike veiled in black haircloth mantles, their heads covered with ashes, threw themselves prostrate on the earth;[2] and hoped, by tears and loud cries of sorrow, and numerous sacrifices, to propitiate their offended God.[3] Multitudes crowded to the temple, in wild excitement, and terror for the future. Taking his place where the throng was greatest, in the open hall of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, the scribe, in the east forecourt, Baruch bravely read aloud the whole ominous contents of the prophetic roll. Its long alternation of threats and promises had probably been heard before, by some present, but they had then paid no attention to them. Now, however, when Nebuchadnezzar's army was hurrying on to the city, they made a deep impression. Jeremiah had foretold, years before, that the Chaldean would come, and he was now actually approaching; might not the rest of his prophecies also be fulfilled in due time? He had predicted that the king of Babylon would surely destroy them as a nation, if they did not repent. The whole assembly was startled and alarmed. A young man, Micaiah, the son of Baruch's host, Gemariah, awed by what he had heard, hastened to the chief secretary's hall in the palace, on Mount Zion, where the princes were at the time gathered, and told them, with eager excitement, what had been read from the roll of the prophet. The recital now, at last, alarmed them also. Men's minds were in such a tension that indifference to the warnings of the prophet was no longer possible. Among those

[1] Jer. vii. 4. [2] See the parallel case in Joel ii. 17.

[3] In Jer. xxxvi. 7, the word translated "present," includes the attitude as that of prostration before God. It is part of the verb "to fall down," "to prostrate oneself."

present were Elishama, the chief secretary,[1] in whose hall the princes were assembled; Gemariah, the father of Micaiah; and Elnathan, the son of Achbor, who, by Jehoiakim's orders, had brought back the prophet Urijah from Egypt to Jerusalem, to be put to death. Fear, however, had, for the time, induced moderate counsels, and an order was therefore sent by an attendant, Jehudi, "the Jew,"[2] to Baruch, to come forthwith, bringing with him the prophet's roll. Instantly obeying, he was invited to sit down, for Eastern teachers sit as they speak, and read it once more, aloud. But the words only confirmed Micaiah's report, and intensified the previous excitement, till a visible shudder ran through the hearers.[3] For the moment even the most stubborn among them were awed into alarm. The roll must clearly be brought before the king, and read to him also. Possibly he, too, might at last be aroused, and induced to follow the advice of Jeremiah, by peaceably yielding to Nebuchadnezzar. He might, even, turn penitently to God, and institute religious reforms, as Josiah had done when he heard the Book of the Law. But they knew his cruel despotic nature, and warned Baruch to go, forthwith, to Jeremiah, and with him flee into safe hiding for the time. This done, they went to the king's private apartments in the warmly built winter chambers, in the inner court of the palace, leaving the roll behind them in the chief secretary's rooms. The weather was chilly,

[1] Graetz calls him the adjutant general of the army, that is, the officer in charge of the rolls of the forces. *Geschichte*, vol. ii. p. 351.

[2] In Jer. xxxvi. 14, Jehudi's great-grandfather's name is given as "Cushi," = the Ethiopian. Hence, probably, the distinctive name "Jehudi," the Jew, to mark desire of full identification with Israel.

[3] So in the Heb. Jer. xxxvi. 16.

and a brazier, sunk in a hole in the centre of the floor, as is still the custom of the East, sent up a welcome glow, in the pleasant warmth of which the king was reclining.

A verbal statement of the contents of the roll sufficed to banish any hope of its affecting Jehoiakim favourably. It must be brought and read to him. He would hear the very words Jeremiah had dared to say against him and his rule. Jehudi therefore brought it, and proceeded forthwith to read it, for a third time, aloud. But a few columns were enough to rouse the lawless and stormy temper of the king. Snatching the book from the hands of the reader, and demanding from Elishama[1] his scribe's knife, he deliberately proceeded to cut the huge roll into slips, which he threw, successively, on the burning charcoal, till the whole was consumed. In vain Delaiah and Gemariah, and even Elnathan, the accomplice in the king's murder of Urijah, implored him not to burn it. Instead of penitence, there was only defiance. In contrast to Josiah, he showed no sign and uttered no word of sorrow. The few who had heard the roll in Elishama's rooms might be overwhelmed by its contents, but neither the king nor the circle of attendants[2] round him showed any alarm, or rent their garments, in token of grief at the awful threatenings. Instead of this, orders were instantly given to arrest both Baruch and Jeremiah, but "Jehovah hid them," and the search was unsuccessful.[3]

[1] The knife was a scribe's knife. I have assumed it was that of the chief scribe or secretary, who was present. Scribes used knives for erasures.

[2] Heb., servants.

[3] The persons ordered to arrest the prophet and Baruch, were Jerahmeel, "a son of the king," that is, a royal prince, Seraiah (certainly not Seraiah the brother of Baruch), and Shelemiah—not he of that name mentioned in chap. xxxvii. 13.

Little did Jehoiakim think what he had done. He had rejected the last opportunity of saving his dynasty and his country. The final offer of mercy had been treated with scorn. But his impotent ungodliness had itself foreshadowed the result. The fragments of the roll, as they crackled in the flames, were a forecast of the destruction of his House, his city, and his country. Jeremiah received the news of the sacrilege, in his hiding place, only to reiterate with greater fulness the contents of his prophecies. Taking another roll, he once more dictated to Baruch, not only all the contents of the former one, but also large additions. The fire had consumed the written letter, but it had risen from the ashes in more awful completeness. Nor did Jehoiakim escape a personal message from the secret retreat of the prophet. In the recesses of his palace he learned, we know not how, that Jehovah had instructed Jeremiah to say to him:

Thus says Jehovah,[1] Thou hast, indeed, burned this roll, saying, "Why have you written in it, that the king of Babylon will certainly come and destroy this land, and destroy man and beast from it!" Therefore, thus says Jehovah, of thee Jehoiakim, king of Judah: He shall have no son to sit on the throne of David, and his dead body will be cast out to lie, unburied, in the heat by day, and the frost by night. And I will punish him, his seed, and his servants for their iniquity, and bring on them, and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and on the men of Judah, all the evil I have spoken against them; to which they would not give ear.

Nor did he confine himself to this general denunciation. The character and life of the king were held up to popular condemnation. The tyranny and harshness shown in the building of his great palace, were fiercely attacked.

[1] Jer. xxxvi. 29-31.

Woe (cried the prophet), to him—that is Jehoiakim—who builds his house with unrighteousness,[1] and his halls with wrong; who makes his neighbour work for nothing, giving him no wages for his labour; who says "I will build me a great house with wide halls," and cuts out many windows in them, and wainscots it with cedar, and paints it with vermilion! Do you think you will reign long because you vie with Ahaz[2] as to your cedar work? Did not your father enjoy his life,[3] and yet he practised justice and uprightness? Then, it went well with him. He gave justice to the poor and needy, and he prospered. Is that not what I mean, by "knowing Me," says Jehovah? But your eyes and heart are turned to nothing but your covetousness, and to shed innocent blood, and to oppression and violence. Therefore, says Jehovah, of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah: No one will raise the lament for him when he dies, "Ah, my brother!" or "Ah, sister." There will be no lamentation for him, "Ah, my Lord!" or, "Ah, his glory!" He shall be buried with the burial of an ass; drawn out from Jerusalem, and cast down far from its gates!

With such feelings to the king, and after such utterances respecting him, it is little wonder that we hear no more of Jeremiah till the next reign begins.

The incidents of the great fast day had excited intense feeling, which the audacious impiety of Jehoiakim must have deepened. A division of opinion had been created even in the royal council; some, henceforth, urging submission to Nebuchadnezzar, in obedience to Jeremiah's warnings. The king could not, in such a state of affairs, carry out his mad purpose of defying Babylon, and was forced to make submission, and become its vassal, pledging himself, we may take for granted, to furnish a contingent to the Babylonian army, and discharge all other duties of a dependent. On these conditions he retained his throne. The prophet could once more appear in

[1] Jer. xxii. 13-19. [2] *Sept.* *Ewald.*
[3] Lit., "eat and drink."

public; but henceforth, till after Jehoiakim's death he seems to have refrained from addressing the people. His written prophecies might be left to do their work. Judah had rejected him, and its day of mercy was now past. The princes, whom his words had impressed, stood between him and the fury of the crown, and it is quite possible that even at this time the Babylonians had learned how zealously he had counselled submission to them, and had taken him under their protection.

But Jehoiakim was not a man to make the best of the inevitable. The Chaldean vassalage pressed so heavily on him, that that of Egypt seemed lighter in comparison. Incitements to rebel were, moreover, constantly urged by the agents of Necho. At last, after three years of forced humiliation,[1] he ventured to raise the standard of revolt, but only to bring down swift ruin on himself and his country. The struggle of Babylon with Egypt was still raging, so that Chaldean armies were within easy distance, to crush the rebellion at once. Jerusalem was forced to open its gates to Nebuchadnezzar, and Jehoiakim, after he had been put in chains, saved himself from being carried off to Babylon by renewed abject submission.[2] Heavier terms than before were exacted, and Judah had to bear the supreme indignity of seeing the richest of the sacred vessels carried off from the temple, to adorn the house of the conqueror's god, at Babylon.[3] The SEVENTY YEARS of Judah's bondage had begun.

The remainder of Jehoiakim's reign was increasingly calamitous. Restless and stubborn, he struggled against a position which he could not hope to change for the better, and in his turbulence, brought disaster on the land. Too much engaged to crush him at once, Nebu-

[1] 2 Kings xxiv. 1. [2] 2 Chron. xxxvi. 6.
[3] Dan. i. 2; v. 2. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 7.

chadnezzar employed the nations round, who, for the most part, had submitted to the Chaldeans, to assist their detachments on the spot, in harassing Judah, till he himself could come against it. Raids of Syrians, Moabites, and of the B'nai Ammon, therefore, swept up every glen.[1] Hereditary feuds, thus easily gratified, left the country no peace. It seemed like a speckled bird, assailed by all the birds around.[2] Desolation and ruin marked many a hitherto smiling valley.

At last, in B.C. 598, the Great King was once more free to undertake the conquest of Egypt,[3] and marched to it through Palestine, with strong contingents from Moab, Ammon, and Edom—the bitter enemies of Judah. Jerusalem was ere long besieged,[4] but, meanwhile, Jehoiakim died, and thus escaped the rage of his master. A mystery hangs over his death, befitting the gloom and confusion of the times; one account speaking of him as having fallen in a skirmish with a band of raiders, or in a battle with Nebuchadnezzar, and being left unburied; another as having been murdered in Jerusalem, and cast out on the streets; a third, as having been enticed to Nebuchadnezzar's camp, and there put to death, and left without burial. But, whatever the mode of his death, so bitterly was he hated that no funeral dirge was raised for him,[5] though he was the son of Josiah, and his corpse was left thrown out, like that of a dead ass, on the waste land outside the gates of Jerusalem, in the sun by day, and the frost by night. Ultimately, indeed, if we may trust the Septuagint, his dishonoured body was rescued from this last shame, and interred alongside Josiah

[1] 2 Kings xxiv. 2.
[2] Jer. xii. 7–17.
[3] Lenormant says 597.
[4] *Lenormant*, vol. ii. p. 396. *Maspero*, p. 499.
[5] Jer. xxii. 18, 19; xxxvi. 30.

and Manasseh, in their tomb in the garden of Uzzah, which was connected, apparently, with the royal stronghold on Ophel.[1] But men whispered that on the dried skin of the corpse, as it lay naked before all, the name of the demon, Codonazer, to whom he had sold himself, appeared stamped in clear Hebrew letters.[2]

[1] Böttcher, *Aehrenlese.*

[2] *Thenius,* on 2 Kings xxiv. 6. He traces it to the words in 2 Chron. xxxvi. 8, "that which was found in him," and to Hab. ii. 9, where the words "power," or "grasp of evil," occur.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### JEHOIACHIN, B.C. 598.[1]

ON the death of Jehoiakim, his son Jehoiachin inherited the shadowy dignity of the throne of David. A lad of eighteen, he had learned only too well to imitate his father, and followed the lead of the heathen party implicitly. He was a grandson, moreover, of Elnathan of Jerusalem, who had been base enough to bring the prophet Urijah back from Egypt, to be put to death. With such antecedents little could be expected from the new reign. The queen mother, Nehushta—"brass,"[2] daughter of Elnathan, is specially mentioned; as if she had taken a more than usually prominent part in affairs; though such a relation to the throne always implies a foremost place under Oriental monarchies. But if she did, it mattered little, for her son's power lasted, at most, only a hundred days,[3] and during a large part even of these, Jerusalem was beleaguered by a Chaldean army.

The intrigues of Egypt and the strain of the Babylonian domination, had kindled a fresh revolt against Nebuchadnezzar, throughout Palestine, Perea, and Phe-

[1] Lenormant gives the date at B.C. 597. So also Riehm. Schrader and others say B.C. 598.

[2] Perhaps from her radiant brightness.

[3] 2 Chron. xxxvi. 9.

nicia, and it was imperative that it should be checked, for Pharaoh struggled hard to retain his hold on Asia, and could not be driven out of it while the kings and states of the sea coast were on his side. But the power of Babylon was overwhelming. All resistance was swept away before it, and Necho had now, at last, to retire behind the torrent El Arish,[1] the ancient boundary of Egypt, at the south of the Negeb. Meanwhile, Nebuchadnezzar, engaged elsewhere, could not himself attack Jerusalem, but sent a strong force to invest it. That it did not at once open its gates, rose, in all probability, from its consciousness of having offended too deeply to hope for pardon. South and north it was cut off from help. The towns of the Negeb were blockaded,[2] and the enemy held the land on the north. The fall of the capital was only a question of time.

The three months of Jehoiachin's reign are memorable for the reappearance of Jeremiah, now freed from the persecutions of Jehoiakim. Fearless as ever, he proclaimed afresh, at every opportunity, that the decay of morality and religion was the true cause of the calamities gathering so darkly over the nation; making no secret of the hopelessness of deliverance from them, but holding out a prospect of forgiveness and restoration to his people in the future, if they heartily repented and sought the God of their fathers. He had been forced, by the violence of Jehoiakim, to keep at a distance from Jerusalem as long as that monarch lived, but the interval had apparently been utilized by two journeys to Babylon, to see for himself the country and people with which the destiny of his nation was soon to be so closely associated. Yet, while thus wandering far from his beloved Judah, his heart was still with her, and her impending fate engrossed

[1] 2 Kings xxiv. 7. [2] Jer. xiii. 19.

his thoughts. Even when constrained to silence, he remained a prophet. A Divine impulse, he tells us, had led him, while yet in Jerusalem, to buy and put on a white linen girdle, the type, in its purity, of all moral worth. He was commanded, however, to wear it continuously, without washing it, even when soiled,[1] a thing abhorrent to Orientals, and doubtless attracting wide attention, especially in one whose acts were so often symbolical. He did so, therefore, till his townsmen universally noticed it; but when it had thus become a subject of general remark, he was ordered to make a journey to the far distant river Euphrates,[2] and hide it there in a cleft of the rocks, bordering the stream in parts of its course. Anxious, perhaps, to see Chaldea, he had fulfilled the Divine injunction at once, strange as it may have seemed to him, and after staying a time in the country, returned to Palestine. Ere long, however, a second monition came, requiring him to retrace his steps to the Euphrates and dig out the girdle he had thus secreted, and this also he did; only, however, to find it, as might have been expected, rotten and useless.

There could not have been a more vivid emblem of

[1] Jer. xiii. 1–7.

[2] Graetz and Hitzig think that instead of Ph'rath, the Euphrates, we should read Ephrath = Bethlehem. Jeremiah might have gone twice to the Euphrates during the long period of his forced retirement from public activity under Jehoiakim, but Graetz urges that the force of the symbol would be greater if the whole act was carried out under the eyes of the people. Yet the Euphrates was to be the place of banishment, and the lessons might well be specially connected with the fact. The central parts of the great river were about 500 miles from Judah. From the mention of a long lapse of time between the burial of the girdle and its exhumation, it is moreover likely that the Euphrates is really intended. Travelling seems to have been perfectly safe.

the fate in store for his nation, and bringing it back with him as such, he now reappeared in Jerusalem. 'As the girdle is bound round a man, Jehovah had bound Israel to Him by special covenant and adoption, but its long unfaithfulness had made it foul and offensive. Burial for seventy years, in captivity, on the far distant Euphrates was decreed; it was to be carried off and hidden from the world, and destroyed as a state. As such it would perish, like the linen girdle.

After this manner,—said he,[1] holding up the once white but now worthless sash, before his fellow-citizens, and speaking in the name of God,—will I, Jehovah, destroy the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem! This evil people, who refuse to hear My words, who walk in the stubbornness of their own heart, and follow other gods, to serve and worship them, shall become like this girdle! For as, when in use, it cleaves to a man's loins, so I, as it were, bound to Me the whole House of Israel and the whole House of Judah, and made them like a girdle to Me, says Jehovah, that they might be a people, and a name, and a praise, and a glory to Me. But they would not hear!

Speak, therefore, this word to them:[2] Thus says Jehovah the God of Israel, "Every wine-skin is wont to be filled with wine. And when they say to thee, 'Do we not know that every wine-skin is wont to be filled with wine, what do you mean?' Then thou shalt answer them: Thus says Jehovah, I will fill all the inhabitants of this land—the kings that sit on the throne of David, the priests, and the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, with the drunkenness of despair! And I will dash them one against the other, even the very father and sons, says Jehovah; I will not pity, or spare, or have mercy, but will destroy them!"

Having delivered this message from God, he speaks in his own name.

Hear, and mark[3] ye! Be not haughty, for Jehovah has spoken! Give glory to Jehovah, your God, by confessing your

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[1] Jer. xiii. 8-11. [2] Jer. xiii. 12-14. [3] Jer. xiii. 15-17.

sins,[1] before He cause darkness; before your feet stumble on the dark mountains;[2] before He deepens the gloom into the blackness of death; yea, makes the darkness utter while you in vain wait for light! But if ye will not hear this, my soul shall weep in secret at your pride, and my eye run down with a flood of tears, because Jehovah's flock is carried away captive.

But the voice of God again intervenes,[3] bidding him deliver another message.

Say to the king, Jehoiachin, and to the queen mother, "Sit down in the dust,[4] in lamentation; for the crown of your glory sinks from your heads." The cities of the Negeb—the south country—are shut up, and no one can relieve[5] them. All Judah will be carried off captive; it will be carried off wholly! Lift up your eyes, O Zion, and see the enemy that comes from the North! Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock of towns and villages! Lost to the foe! But what wilt thou say when Jehovah shall set those over thee as captains and as rulers, to gain whose favour thou hast turned aside from Me?[6] Shall not sorrows take thee, as a woman in travail?

And if thou, Zion, say in thine heart[7] "Why has this lot befallen me?" It is because thy guilt is so great that thy skirts are to be cut short[8] like a slave's, and thy feet made sore[9] with the roughness of the way, as thou art led off captive! Can

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[1] Josh. vii. 19. Mal. ii. 2. John ix. 24. "Give God the praise"—"admit that you are deceiving us."

[2] Lit., "the mountains of twilight." [3] Jer. xiii. 18-21.

[4] Lit., "make low, sit down" = sit down in the lowest place

[5] Lit., "open."

[6] Lit., "those to whom thou hast used thyself as thy trusted ones." The allusion is to the kings of Egypt and Babylon. There is a covert reference to the spiritual adultery of Judah with heathen rulers.

[7] Jer. xiii. 22, 23.

[8] Lit., "uncovered." A slave was bare-legged; free men wore flowing robes.

[9] Lit., "treated with violence."

an Ethiopian change his skin, or a leopard his spots? Only then couldst thou do right; accustomed as thou art to do wrong!

I will, therefore, shatter them,[1] like the broken straw[2] of the threshing floor, that flies before the wind of the desert. This is thy lot; the portion thrown into thy lap[3] from Me, says Jehovah! Because thou hast forgotten Me and hast trusted in lies! For this cause I will give thee to slavery; baring thy skirts before thy face—that thy shame may be seen. I have seen thy adulteries; thy lewd stallion-like neighings; the hatefulness of thy impurity; thine idol abominations on the hills,[4] in the country round. Woe to thee, O Jerusalem! How long will it yet be before thou become pure!

The prophet had lamented Josiah in strains repeated through the land on each anniversary of the battle in which that hero fell. He had sighed over Jehoahaz, a captive in Egypt; doomed never to return to Judah, but to die, a prisoner, among strangers.[5] He had denounced the crimes and tyranny of Jehoiakim, and predicted his shameful end. He now announced the calamity impending over still another ill-fated king. A fragment of a longer address remains, in which he once more warns his countrymen of the doom awaiting them, and then passes to that pronounced by God on Jehoiachin.

Ascend the heights of Lebanon,[6] O daughter of Zion, and shriek aloud in thy sorrow! Lift up thy voice from the peaks of Bashan! Shriek aloud from the mountains of Abarim![7] For

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[1] Jer. xiii. 24–27.

[2] Heb. *Kash.* It includes also the chaff.

[3] Lit., "into thy *mad*" or outer garment. The loose fulness of the Eastern blouse, or tunic, as we may call it, above the girdle, makes a capacious pocket in which men carry grain (Luke vi. 38; Matt. vii. 2; Mark iv. 24); and women their children; and which both sexes use in many other ways, as the apron is used among Western nations.

[4] Lit., "hills in the field."

[5] Jer. xxii. 11, 12.

[6] Jer. xxii. 20–23.

[7] Abarim was a chain of hills in Moab. Nebo was among them.

all thy lovers, the peoples who united with thee against the Chaldeans, are destroyed! I spoke to thee in thy prosperity,[1] but thou saidst, "I will not hear." This has, indeed, been thy course from thy youth; that thou hast not listened to My voice! But now, the east wind that scorches bare the pastures,[2] shall sweep away thy shepherds—that is, thy leaders, and thy lovers and the peoples allied with thee against Chaldea, shall go into captivity. Then shalt thou, assuredly, be ashamed and confounded, for all thy wickedness! O inhabitant of Lebanon, who makest thy nest among the cedars, how wilt thou sigh when pangs come upon thee, as of a woman in travail!

Passing on to the coming fate of Jehoiachin, the prophet continues.

As I live,[3] saith Jehovah, though thou, Coniah,[4] the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, were the royal signet ring on my right hand, even thence will I pluck thee, and give thee into the hand of thy mortal enemy, and into the hand of those whose face thou dreadest—the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and the hand of the Chaldeans. And I will hurl thee, and thy mother that bare thee, as a slinger hurls a stone, into another country, where ye were not born, and there will ye die! But to

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[1] Plural in Heb.

[2] The east wind, in the hot months, becomes the *sirocco* when it blows from the *south-east*. When at its worst it dries the mucous membrane of the air passages, producing catarrh and sore throat; induces great lassitude in those who walk or work in it; headache, as if a cord were bound round the temples; oppression of the chest; burning of the palms of the hands and soles of the feet, quickened pulse, thirst, and even fever. It dries and cracks furniture, loosening the joints of tables and chairs, curling the covers of books and of framed pictures, and *parches vegetation, sometimes withering whole fields of young corn. Pal. Fund Rep.* 1883, p. 16. The enemy is here compared to a sirocco.

[3] Keil notices that Jeremiah omits the "Je" before Coniah, changing the sense from "Jehovah will strengthen," to "Jehovah strengthens," as if denying him hope for the future.

[4] Jer. xxii. 24–27.

the land to which they will lift up their soul to return, they never shall come back!

"Is, then, this man Coniah,"[1] sighs the prophet at a later time, in deep sympathy with the unfortunate youth, "a despised earthen vessel, to be shattered and cast out? Is he a precious vase, in which, nevertheless, one takes no pleasure? Why then were they hurled away, he and his seed, and cast into a land which they did not know?" O land! land! land! hear the word of Jehovah. Thus says Jehovah, Write this man desolate and forlorn; a father who has no prosperity in his days. For no man of his race will prosper! no one of them will sit on the throne of David, or rule, hereafter, in Judah.[2]

It seems wonderful that a preacher who spoke thus of the ruling king, in a small community like Jerusalem, should have been left at liberty; wonderful, indeed, that an almost absolute ruler should not have put him at once

[1] Jer. xxii. 28-30.

[2] That "his seed" should be carried into captivity with him shows that Jehoiachin was not childless. The word used refers only to the having no one who would perpetuate his honours after him. He was childless so far as his royalty was concerned. In 1 Chron. iii. 17, sons of his are mentioned. See also Matt. i. 12. He was succeeded by his uncle Mattaniah—that is Zedekiah. The word rendered "childless" in the A.V. means strictly, desolate—forlorn—as one bereaved—hence, it at times means "childless," Gen. xv. 2. Bertheau thinks that seven sons of Jehoiakim are mentioned in 1 Chron. iii. 17, 18. We have no further notice of six of these (if they were his sons), but the seventh, Shealtiel, was the grandfather of Zerubbabel, the prince of the first Jews who returned from exile about B.C. 538. *Die B. der Chronik.*, p. 29. Keil says, Jehoiakim had only two sons—Zedekiah and Assir—of whom the first died childless, and the second had only a daughter. Assir, it may be said, is constantly taken to mean "the captive," as referring to Jehoiachin. I quote this to show the opposite views held by scholars on this as on many other minute points of biblical criticism. Jehoiachin was eighteen when carried off, but marriages are made very early in the East, and polygamy prevailed in the royal family.

to death. It may be, that the friends of the prophet were powerful enough to screen him; but if Jehoiachin had not had some good qualities, it would assuredly have fared ill with so bold a spirit. What would have been the fate of a preacher who had denounced the worst of our own kings in even very much milder terms?

The fierce energy of the Chaldeans in the siege, speedily showed that the only hope for the citizens lay in the king's unconditional surrender of his person to the enemy, and on this Jehoiachin nobly resolved. Going out in sad procession, through a gate which henceforth bore his name,[1] but was afterwards built up that no one might pass through the arch that had seen so great a humilation; he and the queen mother, with their attendants, and the nobles and court officials, presented themselves before the enemy, sitting down,[2] like mourners, on the ground, clad no doubt in black, their faces covered with their mantles,[3] to await their doom. The incident was never forgotten. Writing after the last fall of Jerusalem, Josephus tells us that as long as the city stood, the anniversary of an event so touching was commemorated in the services of the temple, as a signal instance of self-sacrifice for the public good. Jehoiachin had gone, with his family, men said, into voluntary captivity, to save the temple from being destroyed,[4] and we may, also, readily believe, to save the city and its inhabitants.

But his hope of clemency was doomed to disappointment. With all his genius, Nebuchadnezzar was a true

[1] Ewald, *Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 791.

[2] Jer. xiii. 18. 2 Kings xxv. 12.

[3] This follows from their assuming the character of mourners by sitting on the earth.

[4] Jos., *Bell. Jud.*, VI. ii. 1.

Eastern sultan, hard and stern to conquered rebels. No pity was shown the suppliants. Led at once into the presence of the Great King, who had now arrived before Jerusalem, they were sent as captives to Babylon. But even the banishment of the king and court, with the flower of the nobility, did not seem guarantee enough for the future obedience of a petty state so turbulent as Judah. The royal harem, all the leading men found in Jerusalem, including many priests and prophets,[1] all the princes, 7,000 fighting men, with a crowd of workers in metal, wood and stone, and of armourers,[2] were swept away, at once to weaken and humble the city, and to transfer skilled labour to the royal service at Babylon.[3] Ten thousand men, in all, were carried off from Jerusalem,[4] and over 3,000 from the country round.[5] The prompt capitulation had saved the city from utter destruction, and the population from being, in great part, put to the sword. But the conqueror did not content himself with the mere deportation of captives. The treasures in the palace were seized, and the temple rifled of most of its precious contents; even the gold still left on the walls and gates being rudely hacked off and carried to Babylon.[6]

The shock of such a calamity was terrible. Nearly a hundred and fifty years had passed since the glades beyond the Jordan had resounded with the lamentations

[1] Jer. xxix. 1.

[2] The word means "one who closes," and is usually applied to locksmiths and the like. But the closing the joints of armour, of whatever kind, seems in this case more natural.

[3] Layard thinks that some of the objects of art found in the ruins of Babylon may have been the work of Phenician or other Syrian captives. *Nineveh*, p. 119. *Babylon*. p. 192.

[4] 2 Kings xxv. 14. [5] Jer. lii. 28.

[6] *Thenius*, and Heb.

of the captives of Gilead, dragged away to Assyria by Tiglath Pileser, and it was over a hundred and twenty years since Sargon had marched back to Nineveh, leading the people of the western half of the kingdom of the Ten Tribes into exile. Assyria had fallen within the last few years, and now, itself, lay in ruins as desolate as those of the Hebrew cities it had turned into solitudes. But another power had risen, as fierce and ruthless, and Judah, the last hope of the chosen people, saw its king and its leading citizens swept off in chains to the Euphrates. We live again amidst the agony of the moment, in the outburst of Jeremiah's grief, already quoted. Could it be that the young king was to be cast away like a worthless potsherd;[1] he who seemed to his people under the special care of Jehovah, their covenant God, as if he had been the royal signet-ring on the finger of the Almighty![2] The wild cry of agony seemed to Ezekiel to rise from the top of Lebanon, the hills of Bashan, and the mountains of Moab, as the pale spirit of the land looked down, like a mother robbed of her children, on the long train of her noblest sons—among whom were Ezekiel, and Kish, the great-grandfather of Mordecai[3]—wending away into distant captivity.[4] It may be that in the forty-second and forty-third Psalms we have the lament of one of the exiles, as he took a last look from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermons, and the hill Mizar, on the scenes he was leaving for ever.[5]

[1] Jer. xxii. 28.
[2] Jer. xxii. 24.
[3] Ezek. i. 1; iii. 15. Esther ii. 5.
[4] Jer. xxii. 20.
[5] It is a striking proof of the need for modest diffidence in fixing the dates of the Psalms, to see those which have been assigned by different scholars to the 42nd Psalm. Delitzsch thinks it of the time of David. Vaihinger ascribes it to a Levite driven away by Athaliah. Hitzig, to a priest carried off to Syria in the Syrian wars. Olshausen, to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes.

As the hart pants under the sultry sky for brooks of water,[1]
So pants my soul after Thee, O God!
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God—
When shall I come back and appear before God?
My tears have been my meat day and night,
While they continually say to me "Where is thy God?"
My soul overflows with sorrow when I remember it.

How I used to go up with the multitude to Jerusalem!
How I went with bands, in procession, to the House of God!
With the multitude that kept the joyful feast,[2]
Amidst the voice of praise and loud rejoicing!

Yet, why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted[3] within me?
Hope[4] thou in God, for I will still praise Him!
He is the health of my countenance, and my God.

O my God, my soul is cast down with me!
Therefore will I remember Thee from the land of Jordan, and from the Hermons,[5] from the hill Mizar.[6]
The deep above calls to the deep beneath,[7] at the voice of Thy water-floods;

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Ewald, to Jehoiachin while he rested by night at Hermon, on the way to Babylon. The 42nd and 43rd Psalms are regarded, by nearly all critics, as having originally been parts of one whole now accidentally divided.

[1] **Ps. xlii. 1-11.** The word translated "brooks" (Aphikim) means any strong body of water, such as the torrents which rush down the wadys after heavy rains. Passing away in a few hours, the only traces of them left are pools here and there. The hart is represented as standing over the dry bed of the torrent, panting for some shady spot where water may still be found.

[2] Among the multitude adorned (for the feast). *Sept. Bredenkamp*, p. 143.

[3] Or, moanest thou. [4] Or, wait on.

[5] The hills from the foot of which the Jordan bursts out.

[6] Lit., "smallness." Position unknown.

[7] Perhaps the ocean overhead and the ocean around, or, possibly, the sounding waterfalls of the hills have their tumult answered

All Thy waves and Thy billows have gone over me!
But some day Jehovah will send forth[1] his loving-kindness to me again,
And by night the song to Him will be with me, and prayer to the God of my life!
I will say to God, my Rock, "Why hast thou forgotten me?
Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?"
As with a crushing of my bones, my enemies reproach me;
Daily saying to me, "Where is thy God?"

Why art thou cast down, O my soul, why art thou disquieted within me?
Hope Thou in God, for I shall still praise Him,
He is the health of my countenance, and my God!

Judge me, O God,[2] and plead my cause against an ungodly nation;
O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man!
For Thou art God, my fortress; why hast Thou cast me off?
Why go I mourning, because of the oppression of the enemy?

Send forth Thy light and Thy truth! let them lead me,
Let them bring me to Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles,[3]
That so I may come to the altar of God,
To God my exceeding joy!
And praise Thee on the harp, O God, my God!

Why art thou cast down, O my soul; why art thou disquieted within me?
Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him,
The health of my countenance, and my God!

Babylonia, however, was not altogether a strange land to the captives. Numbers of their fellow-countrymen

back from their channels beneath. The word translated "deep," means the sea, the abyss from which rivers flow up, or any mass of raging waters. It may be the poet refers to the bursting of a heavy rain-cloud. A tropical rain is amazing in its vehemence. The word for "waterfloods" means a rush of waters. In 2 Sam. v. 8, the only other text in which it occurs, it seems to mean a conduit.

[1] Lit., "command." [2] Ps. xliii. 1-5. [3] Or, dwelling-places.

had already been carried thither after the battle of Carchemish, and on the second invasion of Palestine by Nebuchadnezzar, and had been settled at Tel Abib, which may be translated "Cornhill," on the banks of a great canal, the Chebar,[1] connected with the Euphrates somewhere in Lower Mesopotamia. That men like Daniel and his three companions were among these first bands of exiles, must have softened the regrets of banishment; the fresh prisoners being settled in a great colony among their brethren carried off before them. Jehoiachin himself was bitterly humbled. Clad in coarse prison garments, he had to bear the miseries and degradation of an Eastern jail—tempered, however, by the company of his wife[2]—till the death of Nebuchadnezzar, thirty-six years later. Not till then was pity shown him. The new king, Evil Merodach, having no such personal feeling against him as had swayed his father, strove to atone for the long sufferings of the unfortunate exile, by setting him free, and entertaining him thenceforward at the royal table, in suitable splendour.[3] Legend has brightened the story of his last days; describing him as living on the Euphrates, in a sumptuous house, surrounded by a spacious paradise, and married to the fairest woman of his day, the chaste Susannah;[4] the companion of the king of Babylon, and

[1] Ezek. i. 1; iii. 15. See Fried. Delitzsch, *Wo lag das Paradies?* p. 47. Schrader, art. *Ezekiel*, in *Bib. Lex.* There were at least thirty-five broad canals, each with a distinctive name. *Delitzsch*, p. 193. The *Dict. of the Bible* names a special canal, "The Royal," as probably the Chebar.

[2] This follows from his children having been born in Babylon.

[3] Jer. lii. 31–34.

[4] Susannah i. 4. The Joiakim of this passage was identified in the early Church with Jehoiachin. Africanus (*Ep. ad Orig.*, Routh's *Rel. Sac.*, vol. ii., p. 113), quoted by Lord Arthur Hervey, *Dict. of the Bible*, vol. i. p. 943.

the chief personage, and high judge among the captives. It is added, moreover, that amidst all, he was still mindful of his native land, listening, with his brethren, to Baruch, as he read the prophecies before them, and amidst weeping, fasting and prayer, sending off help to the remnant of his people in Jerusalem.[1] But this touching picture is only a creation of national pride, to adorn with a fictitious prosperity the closing years of the last direct heir to the Jewish crown.

After the deportation of so many of its leading men and its best mechanics, Judah was feeble in the extreme. Yet population enough remained to form the beginning of a state that might ultimately be prosperous, if, only, it remained peacefully dependent on Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar evidently intended this, for he left the walls of Jerusalem, and strong places like Lachish and Azekah, untouched. The troublesome Egyptian party in the aristocracy had been carried off, or was thought to have been so, but enough members of the upper classes, favourable to Babylon, had been left, to supply the king with officials and to support the dignity of the throne. It rested with Judah itself whether it should continue a nation, by submitting to Nebuchadnezzar, or perish by vain resistance.

Small as it was, the land had a wonderful power of recovering itself after the heaviest blows. The temple, the palaces, and the mansions of the great, still made Jerusalem proud of its beauty, and it was the centre of a trade that brought rich gain to its citizens. The soil of the country round, though scanty, was exceedingly fertile. Diligent labour was repaid with ample harvests. The Phenicians, as has been noticed, year by year exported from Judah great quantities of wheat, date

[1] Baruch i. 3 ff.

syrup, oil, and balsam,[1] in exchange for their own manufactures, and their imports from every part of the world. Jerusalem supplied the demands of the various peoples east and south;[2] Phenician exchangers, settled in it, facilitating commercial transactions.

Various trades and arts, moreover, flourished. There was a guild of masons,[3] to whom the plummet, the measuring line, the compasses, and the square, were as familiar as to us.[4] Sculpture had taken root in Judah, since its contact with Assyria, and metal workers showed at once their skill and moral laxity by casting idols of all sizes, while gold and silver workers found only too much trade in moulding costly vessels for the luxurious aristocracy, and covering the wooden figures of idols with plates of the precious metals,[5] brought through Tyre, from the mines of Spain and India.[6] The mansions of the rich were wainscoted with cedar; their floors adorned with mosaics,[7] and the roofs and walls set off with bright colours.[8]

Nor was high culture wanting. The writings of the prophets and psalmists imply an equal activity in various directions. Like other Orientals, the Hebrews delighted in proverbs and riddles, and they had a literature of songs and elegies.[9]

Nor was their social declension without some mitigations. The praise of the virtuous wife, in the Book of Proverbs, shows that, if the king and a few of his nobles

[1] An export called *Pannag* is also mentioned, Ezek. xxvii. 17, which is rendered "comfits" by Ewald, and "millet" in the Peshito.

[2] *Graetz*, vol. ii. p. 362.

[3] Masger.

[4] 2 Kings xxiv. 14. Amos vi. 7. Isa. xliv. 13.

[5] Hos. xiii. 2. Ps. lxxviii. 72. Jer. xliv. 19; x. 4.

[6] Jer. x. 9.

[7] Maskhit. *Graetz*, vol. ii. p. 362.

[8] Jer. xxii. 14.

[9] 2 Chron. xxxv. 25.

practised polygamy, the community, as a rule, were free from it. No picture of a happy home could be more perfect than the ideal painted as that of these long past times. A house-mother in whom the heart of her husband can safely trust, so that he never wants; who does him good and not harm all the days of her life; whose life is ceaselessly busy with every womanly work and art; whose household are clothed in scarlet; whose husband is honoured among his neighbours; whose children arise and call her blessed,[1] speaks of domestic life of the noblest type as still familiar in some of the homes of Judah.

A people among whom such a conception of woman existed, must, indeed, have had much good in it even in the worst times, for mothers form the characters of their sons. Home is the cradle of the spirit as well as of the body. It is natural, therefore, to read that the stony hills and valleys of Judah were often merry with the song and dance. At marriages, and the vintage, and the yearly feasts, flutes, tambourines, and harps made music to the chorus of happy voices. Games were keenly followed by the youth, one especially being noticed by Zechariah[2]—a trial of strength by lifting great weights. Contests of wit were a familiar amusement, as in the days of Samson; the members of a company striving to puzzle each other by riddles, or to show their smartness in joke or repartee.

[1] Prov. xxxi. 10–31.

[2] Zech. xii. 3. Jerome, on the verse, says, of his own day, "The old custom is still preserved in the towns of Palestine and through Judea, to have in the villages, towns, and towers, round stones of great weight, with which the young men are wont to try their strength, some lifting them to their knees, some to their breasts, some to their shoulders and heads."

Then, however, as now, there was a sharp contrast between the town and the country. The quiet life of the field or garden gave little opportunity for sharpening the faculties, compared with the capital; and the same half contemptuous sense of this, which has, in our own language, changed the old English name for peasant[1] into the modern "boor," pictured the Jewish Am-ha-aretz, or countryman, as the equivalent of a rude clown.[2] In Jerusalem, moreover, public speaking seems to have been as carefully studied by the upper classes as it was among the Greeks; the popular liberty always cherished among the Hebrews making the arts of persuasion necessary to those who would gain power or public influence.[3] Agitators and schemers could flatter with their tongues, and only too often realized that they could gain their end by dexterous speech more easily than by force.[4]

Since the death of Josiah, the government of Judah had been virtually an oligarchy. The kings could do little, and in their fear of a conflict with a powerful aristocracy, gave themselves up to the effeminacy of a life in their harem or to busy idling. Only the nearest relatives, and a few favourites, had the right of entry to the presence.[5] Surrounded by black eunuchs, the successors of David were only nominal kings.[6] Even the kingly prerogative of supreme judge seems to have passed, before the fall of the city, into the hands of the

[1] "Bauer," still the German word.

[2] The word "clown" itself is "colonus," a cultivator of the soil, a ploughman.

[3] Ps. xii. 4. [4] Ps. lv. 21.

[5] 2 Kings xxv. 19. Jer. lii. 25. In the one passage the number of these favourites is five, in the other seven.

[6] 2 Kings xxiv. 15. Jer. xxxviii. 22. 2 Kings xxiii. 11. Jer. xxxiv. 19; xli. 16; xxxviii. 7, etc.

court and the princes;[1] men, who, in not a few cases, had sunk so low as to devote their principal care to the preservation of their personal beauty.[2] It would have needed a strong and vigorous ruler to save the nation from utter ruin, and unfortunately such a man did not fill the throne after Jehoiachin's fall.

[1] Jer. xxi. 12; xxii. 3; xxvi. 10.

[2] Lam. iv. 7. Where "Nazarites" refers, from the parallel in the next verse, to the princes.

# CHAPTER XVIII.

## ZEDEKIAH, B.C. 598–588.[1]

| KING OF BABYLON. | KINGS OF EGYPT. |
|---|---|
| NEBUCHADNEZZAR, B.C. 604–562. | PHARAOH NECHO, B.C. 612–596. |
| | PSAMMETICHUS II., 596–591.[2] |
| | PHARAOH HOPHRA, 591–572. |

IT might have been thought that, after the bitter results of the revolt against Babylon, under Jehoiachin, the ruler who succeeded him would have learnt a lesson of quiet submission. But the Chaldeans themselves had done much to stir up future trouble. The flower of the various influential classes had been carried off, though some who escaped the enemy, or were thought friendly to Babylonian vassalage, still remained. The land, however, must have been greatly weakened, since only 4,600 men were thought worth banishing, after the final insurrection.[3] Many of the boldest and most restless spirits had fled to Egypt,[4] in their detestation of Babylon; the ancient and familiar civilization of the Nile valley seeming preferable to the harsh and barbarous rule of the newly risen Chaldean kingdom. The leaning of the people, generally, was towards dependence on Pharaoh rather than on Nebuchadnezzar, and this boded no good for the future.

[1] 599, *Schrader*. 598, *Riehm*. 597, *Lenormant* and *Maspero*.
[2] 589, *Maspero*. [3] Jer. lii. 28–30. [4] Jer. xxiv. 8.

Still, the necessities of the position appeared to guarantee peace. The land was exhausted, its towns stripped of their fighting population, its resources wasted, its affairs thrown into confusion. Society had to be largely reconstructed, for the poorer classes were now a large majority, and most of the capitalists, statesmen, and substantial citizens were exiles. The framework of the whole community, however, had been left. There were materials for a court; the city and country towns were intact; the soil remained free, and there was population enough to make the kingdom ere long prosperous and happy, if it were contented to be dependent. Nebuchadnezzar's aim in sparing Jerusalem had evidently been to maintain a weak tributary state between himself and Egypt, as an outpost of his empire, and a check on invasion of Asia from the Nile.

After the banishment of Jehoiachin the choice of a successor, by the conqueror, fell on his uncle Mattaniah, "the gift of Jehovah," the third son of Josiah. He was a boy of ten years old when his father fell at Megiddo, and was now in his twenty-first year.[1] His half-brother, Jehoiakim, had been the son of a second wife of his father; but he and Jehoahaz, now an exile in Egypt, were full brothers, the sons of Hamutal, of Libnah, in the mountain lowlands.[2] Unfortunately, for more than a generation all the kings had been very young at their accession: Josiah, a child of 8; Jehoahaz, 23; Jehoiakim, 25; Jehoiachin, the nephew of Mattaniah, 18. Instead of such inexperienced rulers, at so perilous a crisis, the helm of state demanded a strong hand and a firm will. Mattaniah,

[1] 2 Kings xxiv. 18. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 11.

[2] 2 Kings xxiii. 31; xxiv. 18. The affection of full brothers was proverbial. They fancied they were closer relations to each other than a son is to a father or mother.

unfortunately, had neither. Rather weak than bad; wanting in foresight, irresolute, without force of will to take and keep his right position as head of the country; anxious to follow the counsels of the prophets, but without the courage to do so; he became the mere sport of factions, and at last was brought by them into ruinous conflict with Babylon, against his own better judgment and convictions. A Charles I. or Louis XVI., when the country needed a Longshanks or Cromwell; he might have ruled well in quieter times, but was unfit for those on which he fell. But the succession was quite regular, for Jehoiachin was as yet childless; his sons being born after he was carried to Babylon.[1]

Counting perhaps on his gentleness of disposition and aversion from war, Nebuchadnezzar, instead of setting up a Chaldean governor or resident in Jerusalem, appointed Mattaniah to the throne. He took care, however, to require from him a solemn oath by Elohim,[2] that he would be a faithful vassal to Babylon, making no innovations, and forming no league or alliance with Egypt. He was thus bound by every consideration of interest, honour, religion and gratitude, to be true to the Chaldean ruler. His two predecessors had been in a very different position. For him, disloyalty *must* bring ruin.

On taking the throne, Mattaniah changed his name to Zedekiah, "the righteousness of Jehovah," as if his first impulse had been to rule in the fear of God, like his

[1] 1 Chron. iii. 17. Assir = the captive.

[2] 2 Chron. xxxvi. 13. Ezek. xvii. 13. Jos., *Ant.*, X. vii. 1. 1 Esdras i. 48. Elohim was a general expression for the Divine Being. Nebuchadnezzar did not recognise the power of Jehovah, since he seemed to have prevailed against Him by subduing His people.

illustrious father. The hopes of the prophets seem to have been for the moment revived, for the great name, Jehovah Tsidkenu—"the Lord our Righteousness"[1]—by which Jeremiah in after years looked forward to the Messiah, appears as if it had been at least suggested by that of a king whose adopted name was so nearly identical.[2] But the gleam of sunshine soon passed away.

To a race like the Jews, proud beyond all others in the belief that Jehovah, the God of the whole earth, had chosen them as His peculiar people,[3] subjection to a foreign ruler was intolerable. Was not the temple, the "House" of the mighty God, in their midst? Could He allow it to fall into the hands of the worshippers of other gods, and thus let those gods be thought superior to Himself? Would He not, assuredly, make bare His holy arm in their defence, as of old, if they were attacked, and give them the victory over their enemies? Fanaticism had largely taken the place of genuine religion, and the disasters of the past had not destroyed a belief in the invincibility of Judah, which had its roots in national pride. At the opening of Zedekiah's reign, moreover, there seemed hope for Judea and the nations around. All sighed for their old independence. Nebuchadnezzar was not as yet, in the public imagination, the irresistible conqueror he became in the thirty-six years of his reign which still remained. Common misery had for the time obliterated old feuds in Jerusalem. The iron of slavery had entered into the soul of the people; there was but one thought among them—to regain their freedom. Desperation overpowered prudence.

Nor was this agitation confined to Judah. Far away

[1] Jer. xxiii. 5–7. *Leyrer*, in *Herzog*, vol. xxi. p. 542.
[2] Zedekiah, in Hebrew, is *Tsidkiyyahu*, or *Tsidkiyyah*.
[3] Deut. xiv. 2; xxvi. 18. Ps. cxxxv. 4. Exod. xix. 5.

on the Euphrates the banished magnates of Jerusalem dreamed, as all exiles dream, of a speedy return to their own country, and plotted incessantly to bring it about. Even in Jerusalem it was fondly believed that Jehoiachin would soon come back to his own again.[1] False prophets zealously favoured this delusion, to please the people, and men like Jeremiah were powerless to convince their fellow-citizens, against their will, of the folly of these expectations. Pharaoh Necho, however, had died in the second year of Zedekiah's reign,[2] and his son Psammetichus II. was too busy with schemes of conquest in Ethiopia to interfere in the affairs of Palestine. Religious troubles in the countries south of Egypt supplied a pretext for war with them, while he, further, claimed their sovereignty through his aunt, an Ethiopian princess, whom he had married. A new sect in these territories, led by some priests, asserted the right to eat the flesh of sacrifices raw, dispensing with the hitherto indispensable cooking; an outrage on all Egyptian ideas, to be suppressed by the sword. An expedition was therefore undertaken to crush the heretics; Carians and Phenicians, among others, forming mercenary corps in the Egyptian force; as inscriptions, left by some of them on the limbs of one of the colossal statues before the rock temple of Ipsamboul, still curiously show.[3] But Psammetichus returned to Egypt only to die. During his reign, Palestine, quiet outwardly, had seethed with political excitement. Moab, Ammon, Edom, Tyre and Sidon, most of whom

[1] Jer. xxviii. 4.

[2] B.C. 596.

[3] Some of these are as follows:—"When king Psammetichus came to Elephantina, this was written by the companions of Psammetichus, the son of Theocles." "I have been written by Acchon," etc. "Telaphos of Talyson (in the island of Rhodes) wrote me," etc.

had shortly before fought against Judah as allies of Nebuchadnezzar, were anxious to induce Zedekiah to join in a general revolt. The weak Hebrew community was in danger of drifting into a war with the greatest power of the day.

Anxious to quiet the mind of Nebuchadnezzar, and show his own loyalty, Zedekiah, under these circumstances, determined to make a journey to Babylon, to pay his homage for investiture in his kingdom, and to present the gifts customary in the East on such occasions.[1] He had delayed discharging this duty till the fourth year of his reign,[2] and it was now imperative that he should try to clear himself from suspicion of collusion with the restlessness of his subjects, or of the communities round him.

This incident is memorable from the light it throws on the supernatural prevision of the Hebrew prophets. Jeremiah, ever loyal to his countrymen, resolved to take advantage of it, by sending a communication to the exiles, cheering them by revealing the doom in store for Babylon, notwithstanding its pride and strength. The oppressor would, in God's time, be humbled as deeply as the captives now banished from Zion. Having written the prediction on a roll, he committed it to the care of Seraiah, the officer in charge of the royal gifts,[3] with the command that on his reaching Babylon in the train of Zedekiah, he should read it to the exiles, no doubt in secret, and afterwards tie a stone to the roll, and sink

[1] Gifts are, still, always presented in the East by an inferior in approaching a superior for the first time. Bishop Heber relates, that his servants, even to the poorest, brought presents to him on their entering his employment, when he first went to India. Heber's *Journal*, vol. i. p. 25.

[2] Jer. li. 59.

[3] The words, "a quiet prince" (Jer. li. 59) should be thus translated.

it in the Euphrates, repeating as he did so a short form of prayer and concluding comment; thus—"O Jehovah, Thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, so that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever;" adding, as the book sank out of sight in the waters: "Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I, Jehovah, bring upon her; for the Babylonians will, in their turn, wax faint and perish."[1]

The prophecy thus strangely published in the very territory whose doom it proclaimed, has been preserved, from the original left by Jeremiah, of which the roll sent to Babylon must have been a copy. That it was written nearly seventy years before the close of the Chaldean empire, when no sign of its fall could possibly have been visible—when, indeed, it was at the height of its glory as the greatest monarchy of the world—is a startling indication of its Divine source. Inspiration, in its strictest sense, could alone have dreamed of it.

Declare ye,[2] among the nations—began the roll—publish it, and lift up a signal;[3] conceal it not: say, Babylon is taken. Bel[4] is brought to shame; Merodach[5] is in dismay; the idols of Babylon

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[1] Lit., "be exhausted, or wearied out." Jer. li. 59–64.

[2] Jer. l. 1–3. [3] Heb., banner, ensign.

[4] Bel, or Baal, was the chief god of Babylon. His name stands first in two lists of the Babylonian gods, deciphered by Schrader. *Studien u. Kritiken*, 1874, pp. 335 ff.

[5] Merodach, or Marduk, was one of the chief Babylonian gods, and corresponded to the Jupiter of the Romans (*Riehm*, p. 108). It was, in fact, the planet Jupiter. *Riehm*, p. 982. Bel and Merodach were often used as a combined name, and as such it was applied to the tutelar god of Babylon. "The whole Babylonian dynasty," says Oppert, "put Merodach at the head of the gods, and the inscription of Borsippa calls him a king of heaven and earth." *Exped. en Mésopot.*, vol. ii. p. 272.

are put to shame; her dung gods are in dismay! For a nation comes up against her out of the north;[1] it makes her land desolate, so that no one dwells in it; both man and beast are fled from it!

In those days,[2] and at that time, says Jehovah, the sons of Israel and the sons of Judah will return to Palestine together, weeping all the way as they go, and will seek Jehovah, their God. They will ask the way to Zion, with their faces hitherward.[3] And those in Judah will say, "Come, join yourselves to Jehovah, in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." My people have been like lost sheep. Their shepherds led them to mountains on which they went astray;[4] they went from mountain to hill; they forgot their true resting place.[5] All who met them devoured them, and their oppressors said, "We are guilty of nothing, for they have sinned against Jehovah, the Habitation of Righteousness; against Jehovah, the Hope of their fathers." Flee out of Babylon; go forth from the land of the Chaldeans, and be as the he goats before the flock.[6]

## The fall of Babylon is again foretold.

For, lo,[7] I will raise and lead against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the north. They will array themselves against her. From the north will she be taken. Their arrows will be like those of a skilled warrior, who does not return empty.[8] And Chaldea shall be a spoil; all who plunder it will be satisfied with booty, saith Jehovah. For though ye are glad now; though ye rejoice, O ye plunderers of My heritage; though

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[1] In verse 9 the enemy of Babylon is spoken of as an alliance of nations. Their names are given in chap. li. 27, 28.

[2] Jer. l. 4–8.

[3] Jeremiah writes from Jerusalem. Mark this undesigned evidence of the genuineness of the prophecy.

[4] The idol high places in the hills.

[5] Under the shadow of Jehovah.

[6] "The soldiers were obliged to buy a large he-goat, to walk at the head of the flock; for, until they did so, the sheep ran hither and thither, and could not be driven comfortably." *Six Years in India*, p. 114.

[7] Jer. li. 9–13. [8] 2 Sam. i. 22.

ye leap like a heifer on the threshing floor; though ye neigh like stallions, yet, Babylon, your mother, shall soon be put to shame; she that bore you will blush red. For men will say: "Babylon is become the least of the nations, a waste desert, a barren steppe!" Every one who passes by it will be astonished, and hiss at all the punishments she has received.

The enemy is now directly addressed.

Array yourselves against Babylon,[1] round about, all ye that bend the bow; shoot at her; spare no arrow; for she has sinned against Jehovah! Raise the battle shout round her; she has surrendered;[2] her bastions are fallen; her walls are overthrown;[3] for it is the vengeance of Jehovah! Take ye vengeance on her! As she has done, do ye to her! Cut off the sower from Babylon, and him who handles the sickle in the time of harvest! Before the fierce destroying sword every one of the enslaved captives in Babylon will turn to his own people, and flee to his own land. Israel is a sheep driven away from its pasture; the lions have driven it away. First, the king of Assyria devoured it, and now, at the last, this Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, has crunched up its bones. Therefore, Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, speaks thus: Behold, I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I punished the king of Assyria.

Israel, however, has a glorious future before it.

And I will lead Israel back again[4] to his pasture, and he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan, and his soul shall be satisfied on Mount Ephraim and in Gilead. In those days and at that time, saith Jehovah, the iniquity of Israel will be sought, but it will be gone; and the sins of Judah, but they will not be found; for I will pardon those that I leave remaining.

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[1] Jer. li. 14–18.

[2] Lit., "given her hand."

[3] Cyrus only made breaches in the walls, but Darius, in his later siege, destroyed part of them, and threw down all the gates. Blakesley thinks that Cyrus stormed the palace fortress on the bank of the river, by cutting the dam which retained the water in its moats, and then digging through the walls; a scheme never anticipated. *Herod.*, i. 142.

[4] Jer. l. 19, 20.

Babylon, the defiant enemy of Jehovah, will be brought low as a punishment for her offence against His temple at Jerusalem.

Go up[1] against Babylon, the land of Double Rebellion—rebellion by pride and its idolatry, and by its enmity to Jehovah; against it—the City of Punishment[2]—worthy of wrath, and soon to feel it. Let them that attack it, slay and utterly destroy behind them, and do all that I have commanded thee, saith Jehovah!

A sound of battle is in the land, and of great destruction! How is the Hammer[3] of the whole earth cut asunder and broken. How is Babylon become a desolation among the nations! I laid nets for thee, and thou wast taken, O Babylon, when thou didst not expect it.[4] Thou wast found and caught, like a wild beast, because thou hast striven against Jehovah. Jehovah has opened His armoury, and brought out the weapons of His wrath; for Jehovah, the Lord of hosts, has a work to do in the land of the Chaldeans. Come ye up against her, ye nations, from the first of you to the last; open her granaries; throw up her treasures in heaps, and burn them utterly;[5] let nothing be spared! Slay all her people, like bullocks; let them sink to the slaughter! Woe to them, for their day has come; the time of their visitation. Hark! the exiled of Israel are fleeing and escaping out of the

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[1] Jer. l. 21–28.

[2] "Pekod," in A.V., was the name of a place in Babylon, so that "Merathaim" (A. V. ver. 21) may also have been some place, now unknown.

[3] This name, here given to Babylon, was borne by Judas Maccabæus, if the derivation of the latter word be from Makkâbh. Charles Martel is equivalent to Charles the Hammer. He was the grandfather of Charlemagne, and won a great victory over the Saracens at Tours in A.D. 732. On the tomb of Edward I. moreover, are the words Scotorum Malleus, the Hammer of the Scots. The tomb is in Westminster Abbey.

[4] Herodotus speaks of the astonishment of the inhabitants of Babylon at its capture, i. 191; iii. 158.

[5] Lit., "put them under the ban, or destroy them." See Josh. xi. 12, 13. All the wealth of Babylon is in reality meant. What could not be carried off was to be burnt with the city.

land of Babylon, to declare in Zion the vengeance of Jehovah our God against the guilty city; His vengeance against it for destroying His temple!

Call together the archers[1] against Babylon; all ye that bend the bow, invest it round about. Let none escape from her; recompense her according to her work; do to her as she has done; for she has been haughty against Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel! Therefore will her young men fall in the streets, and all her fighting men be destroyed in that day, saith Jehovah. Behold! I come against you, O thou who art Pride incarnate, saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts; for thy day has come; the time when I will punish thee! And the Haughty one[2] will stumble and fall, and no one will raise him up; and I will kindle fire in his cities that will devour all round about him.

Thus saith Jehovah of hosts;[3] The sons of Israel, and the sons of Judah are oppressed together, and all their tyrants have held them fast, and have refused to let them go. But their Redeemer is strong; Jehovah of hosts is His name; He will carry through their cause; to give rest to the earth, and to make the inhabitants of Babylon tremble.

A sword is against the Chaldeans, saith Jehovah, and against the inhabitants of Babylon, and against her princes, and against her "Wise men!" A sword is against her boasters, and they will become fools! A sword is against her braves, and they will be dismayed! A sword is against their horses, and against their chariots, and against all the mercenary soldiers in the midst of her, and they shall become like women! A sword is against her treasures, and they shall be plundered! A drought[4] is against her streams, and they shall dry up! For it is a land of idols, and they let themselves be befooled by these frightful gods!

Therefore,[5] the wild beasts of the desert shall dwell there with jackals; ostriches will dwell in it, and it will be inhabited no more for ever, nor be peopled from generation to generation! As God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and the towns near them, saith Jehovah, no one will abide in Babylon, nor any one dwell in it.

Behold! a people comes from the north, and a great nation and

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[1] Jer. l. 29-32. [2] Lit., "Pride." [3] Jer. l. 33-38.
[4] Sword. *Ewald.* [5] Jer. l. 39-43.

many kings rise up from the farthest parts of the earth. They bold the bow and the lance; they are cruel and without pity; their voice roars like the sea, and they ride on horses, equipped like a warrior for the fight, against thee, O Babylon! The king of Babylon has heard the rumour of them and his hands are powerless; anguish has seized him; fear like that of a woman in travail.

THE SITE OF BABYLON DURING THE INUNDATION OF THE EUPHRATES.
*From a drawing by J. B. Fraser, Esq.*

Behold![1] the enemy comes up against Babylon as a lion ascends from the thickets[2] of Jordan to the hill pastures,[3] and I, Jehovah, will make the flock run, forthwith, in terror from Babylon their

[1] Jer. l. 44–46.

[2] Lit., "pride." The thickets on the edges of the bed of the Jordan are meant. See pp. 165, 262. This passage (44–46) is nearly the same as ch. xlix. 19–21.

[3] Wilton's *Negeb*, p. 43.

pasture, and will appoint over it him who is chosen[1] by Me. For who is My equal, and who may challenge what I do? And who is the shepherd of a people that can stand before Me, if I be against him? Therefore, hear the counsel of Jehovah that He has taken against Babylon, and His purposes that He has determined against the land of the Chaldeans. Surely the enemy shall drag the people of Babylon along into captivity, as lions drag away the weak ones of the flock. Surely Babylon, their pasture, will be confounded at their fate! At the shout, "Babylon is taken," the earth will tremble, and a cry of joy will ring through the nations!

Thus saith Jehovah:[2] Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, and in Laib Kamai,—the heart of My enemy, the Chaldean,[3]—a destroying wind,[4] and I will send against Babylon winnowers,[5] who shall throw her up against the wind with their shovels,[6] and empty her land (for she is but chaff which the wind carries away). For they shall gather round her in the day of her trouble. Let the archer bend his bow against him that bends his from the walls, and against him that stands up in his armour for battle,[7]

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[1] *Ewald. Graf.* [2] Jer. li. 1-4.

[3] The words Laib Kamai are equivalent to the word Casdim, the Chaldeans, in the cipher or secret writing known by the name of Atbasch. See chap. xxv. 26, and p. 345. This secret cipher writing may have been adopted to enforce the fact of Chaldea being the stronghold of the idolatry that corrupted Israel and the world. It could serve no purpose of mere concealment, as the name of Babylon itself had already been repeatedly used openly.

[4] This may be read, "the spirit of a destroyer;" or, "the spirit of destruction," but the second reading suits best what follows.

[5] In the Hebrew text, as it stands, the word is "strangers," "barbarians," and is thus translated by Keil and others; but a very slight change makes it as rendered above, and this is more in harmony with the figure of the prophet.

[6] In the A.V. the words fanner and fan are used. They come from the Latin *vannus*, a broad basket into which the corn and chaff were put after threshing, to be thrown up against the wind, and thus separated. The Jews used a shovel instead of the *vannus*, which is related to *ventus*, the wind.

[7] The word in the A.V. is brigandine, a kind of scale armour of

and spare not her young men; destroy her whole host, so that the slain fall in the land of the Chaldeans, and those thrust through, in her streets.

For Israel[1] is not left widowed, nor Judah, by her God, by Jehovah of hosts; but their land, the land of the Chaldeans, is widowed, which is full of sin against the Holy One of Israel. Flee out of Babylon, and save, every one, his life; perish not through her iniquity! For it is a time of the vengeance of Jehovah. He will repay her according to her works! Babylon was a golden cup in the hand of Jehovah, making drunk the whole earth. The nations drank of her wine, and grew madly besotted. Babylon has fallen suddenly and is shattered to pieces. Raise the loud shriek of mourning for her (ye captives of all nations in her midst); take balm for her hurt, if so she may be healed! But they answer: "We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed. Let us leave her, and let us, every one, go to his own land, for her punishment reaches to heaven and rises even to the clouds. Jehovah has brought to light the justice of our cause.[2] Come, let us tell in Zion the great deed of Jehovah our God!"

## The attack on Babylon is once more described.

Polish the arrows;[3] put on the shields;[4] Jehovah has roused the hearts[5] of the kings of the Medes[6] for His purpose stands

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many jointed plates, very pliant and easy for the body. It got its name from being used by the light-armed foot soldiers known as *brigands*, and came to us from the French. The mercenaries of the Middle Ages, when disbanded, often took to robbery, and hence the modern sense of *brigands*. Thus also a pirate's ship became a *brigantine*, of which *brig* is only an abbreviation. Venables, in *Bib. Educator*.

[1] Jer li. 5–10. [2] Lit., "righteousness." [3] Jer. li. 11–14.

[4] Lit., "fill," *i.e.* with the arm. The *Sept.* and *Vulgate* read "quivers," and are followed by Ewald.

[5] Lit., "spirits."

[6] The chiefs of the different tribes or districts, under whom the Medes lived till they revolted from Assyria in B.C. 714 and put themselves under one head. The Medes, moreover, are used for all the Aryan races who joined against Babylon, they being the

firm against Babylon to destroy it; yea, its utter destruction is the vengeance on it of Jehovah; the vengeance for the destruction of His temple. Set up a standard towards the walls of Babylon;[1] strengthen the picquets; post the sentinels; get ready the spies,[2] for Jehovah has both purposed and carried out what He spoke against the inhabitants of Babylon. O thou that dwellest by many waters,[3] rich in treasures, thine end is come; the measure of thy gains is past. Jehovah of hosts has sworn by His life—"Though I have filled thee with men like grasshoppers for number, yet shall the shout of the treading of the vintage be raised against thee!"[4]

The omnipotence of Jehovah the Creator will triumph over the idols of Babylon, and break in pieces its mighty power.

He who created the earth by His might,[5] and founded the world by His wisdom, and stretched out the heavens by His understanding; when He thunders there is a noise of waters in the skies, and He causeth clouds to rise from the end of the earth: He makes the lightnings bring rain, and brings forth the wind from its storehouses. The knowledge of this makes every man seem without understanding; it makes every idol-founder ashamed of his graven image, for his molten work is a lie; there is no breath in it. They are nothing; they are worthy only of mockery;[6] in the time of their visitation they shall perish.

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chief Aryan nation. S. Spiegel, *Erân*, 1863, pp. 308 ff. In Isa. xxi. 2, Elam is named along with Media, as the assailant of Babylon, which finally fell before Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian; Elam being called Persia from the beginning of his reign. Persians are first expressly named by Ezekiel and Daniel. See pp. 105 ff.

[1] = "To encamp before."

[2] This seems better than "ambushes," which could only be of use in a siege if a sally were enticed. It is used by Ewald.

[3] The many canals of Babylonia, led off from the Euphrates.

[4] The cry of the stormers will be like the song of the treaders of the vintage, red with the blood of the grapes.

[5] Jer. li. 15–19. These verses are almost identical with chap. x. 12–16.

[6] *Jerome.*

Jehovah, the Portion of Jacob, is not like these. He is the Former of the Universe, and of Israel, His own tribe.[1] Jehovah of hosts is His name.

The awful power of Babylon, the Hammer of the earth, used by God to carry out His judgments on the nations, is described.

Thou art[2] My Hammer;[3] My weapons of war; with thee I smite in pieces the nations, and destroy kingdoms. With thee I smite down the horse and his rider; with thee I smite in pieces the chariot, and smite down the charioteer. With thee I smite down men and women; with thee I smite down old and young; with thee I smite down the youth and the maiden. With thee I smite down the shepherd and his flock; with thee I smite down the husbandman and his span of oxen; with thee I smite down rulers of provinces and governors[4] of countries.

But Babylon is itself to be destroyed, for its cruelty to the nations, especially to Israel.

[1] The word is Shaibet, which means a rod growing from the root of a tree; then, the staff of office of the sheik of a tribe; then, a tribe. The Hebrew text reads, lit., "the tribe of his inheritance, or possession," that is, His own peculiar people. For the full significance of Shaibet, see Keil's *Josua*, p. 18.

[2] Jer. li. 20–23.

[3] A mace, club, or maul. The Middle Age "morning star," a club filled, at its head, with sharp points stuck on a round ball, is perhaps nearest the idea. There is one in the trophy on the silver tomb of St. Alex. Newsky at St. Petersburg.

[4] The two words are Pekhah and Sagan. They both occur again in ver. 28; the second also in ver. 57. The first is applied to Tatnai, satrap of the province west of the Euphrates (Ezra v. 6), to Nehemiah (Neh. v. 14), and to Zerubbabel (Hag. i. 1), the governors of the small province of Judah, after the Return. The Assyrians used the word Pahat of the rulers of provinces. (Schrader, *Keilinschr.*, p. 89). Sagan means strictly, deputy of the prince, or viceroy. Its Assyrian equivalent is Saknu = a king's deputy, a ruler. (*Schrader*, p. 270.)

But I will requite Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea, for all the wickedness they have wrought on Zion, before your eyes, saith Jehovah! Behold, I come against thee, O mountain of destruction, saith Jehovah; who hast destroyed the whole earth. I stretch My hand out against thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and make thee a burnt mountain,[2] so that they will not take from thee even a stone for the corner of a house, nor for a foundation stone, but thou shalt be a perpetual desolation, says Jehovah.

## The assailants of Babylon are now summoned to attack her.

"Set ye up a standard[3] on the earth, ye peoples; blow the trumpet among the nations; consecrate the nations for war against her by war sacrifices;[4] summon against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashchenaz.[5] Appoint a scribe to enrol the hosts.[6] Let horses rush on countless as the rough locusts[7]—the terror of mankind. Consecrate against her by sacrifices, the nations, the kings of the Medes, the rulers of their provinces and all the governors of their countries, and all the lands of her empire! The earth trembles and is convulsed with fear, for the purposes of Jehovah against Babylon are being ac-

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[1] Jer. li. 24–26.

[2] The figure of a mighty fortress on a mountain is here used of Babylon, though it was on a plain.

[3] Jer. li. 27–32.

[4] Lit., "consecrate the nations against her."

[5] These three kingdoms were different regions of Armenia. See vol. i. pp. 209, 231. The Minni lived round Lake Van.

[6] The Hebrew word is Tephar = Assyr. *dupsar* = writer on tablets. Fried. Delitzsch, *Wo lag das Paradies?* p. 142.

[7] Locusts in their third stage, when their wings are still enveloped in rough horny cases, which stick up upon their backs. It is in this stage that they are so destructive (*Speaker's Commentary*). I have added the words, however, "the terror of mankind" because the word "rough" = terrible, causing shuddering, may refer only to the alarm they excited and the destruction they wrought.

complished, to make the land of Babylon a desert, without an inhabitant! The braves of Babylon have ceased to fight; they sit in their strongholds; their strength is worn out; they are become like women; the enemy has burned the houses of Babylon; the bars of her city gates are broken through! One foot-runner meets another, rushing in from elsewhere, and messenger meets messenger, come to bring the king of Babylon, in his palace, tidings that "his city is taken from end to end," the ferries occupied;[1] the buildings over the water reservoirs burnt[2] with fire, and the fighting men panic stricken!

For thus saith Jehovah of hosts,[3] the God of Israel; the daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor at the time when the grain is trampled out by the oxen; a little while, and the time of her harvest comes to her! The inhabitants of Zion will say, "Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon has devoured us; He has craunched us in pieces; He has pushed us aside as an empty vessel; He has swallowed us up as might a dragon; He has filled himself with our dainties; He has driven us out of our land." "My wrong and suffering[4] come on Babylon!" will the inhabitress of Zion say, and Jerusalem will add, "my blood come on the inhabitants of Chaldea!"

Therefore, thus saith Jehovah; Behold, I will take up thy cause, and take vengeance for thee. I will dry up her sea—the great lake in her midst,[5] and I will dry up her network of canals.[6] And Babylon shall become heaps of ruin, a dwelling of jackals, an astonishment, and a mockery, without an inhabitant.

The citizens will perish, and also their city and its gods.

[1] There was only one bridge in Babylon. The word meaning lit. "crossings."

[2] Any one who has seen the huge underground reservoirs at Constantinople, their tops broken in, their bottom filled with rubbish, since 1453, when the barbarian Turk took the city, will understand this passage.

[3] Jer. li. 33–37.

[4] Lit., "flesh."

[5] This lake or reservoir was made by Queen Nitocris, and was 420 furlongs = $52\frac{1}{2}$ miles in circumference. *Herod.*, i. 185.

[6] Lit. "her spring"—the source of her canal supply.

The inhabitants of Babylon[1] may roar like lions; they may growl like young lions, while they glow with triumph at their greatness. I will prepare their drinking feasts, and will make them drunk,[2] that they may rejoice, and then sink into a perpetual sleep, never awaking, saith Jehovah! I will drive them down like lambs to the slaughter-house; like rams and he goats! How is Sheshach[3]—that is, Babylon—taken! How is the city that was the Wonder of the whole Earth made a prize![4] How is Babylon become an astonishment among the nations!

The sea-like army of her foes has come up against Babylon; she is covered with the noise of its waves! Her cities are a desolation, a land of drought, a barren steppe; a land in which no man dwells, and through which no man passes. For I will punish Bel, in Babylon, and bring forth out of his mouth what he has swallowed down; and the nations will no longer stream to him; the very wall of Babylon shall fall!

## The Jewish captives in Babylon are now addressed.

Go out of her,[5] My people! Save, every man, his life from the fierce anger of Jehovah. And beware lest your heart faint, and be not dismayed at the rumour you hear in the land, when one report comes this year and still another the next, and there is violence in the land. Let this tell you that, behold, the days come, says Jehovah, when I will execute judgment on the graven images of Babylon, and when her whole land will be made desolate, and all her slain shall fall in the midst of her.[6] Then will heaven and earth, and all that is therein, rejoice over the fall of Babylon; for they that will lay it waste come from the north, says Jehovah. Babylon must fall, O ye slain of Israel, for through her have fallen the slain of the whole earth!

Ye exiles of Judah that have escaped the sword, begone from the midst of her; tarry not! Remember Jehovah when far from Zion, and let Jerusalem come to your mind! (In that day ye will say), "We were put to shame when we heard the reproach

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[1] Jer. li. 38-44.

[2] This was wonderfully fulfilled at the taking of Babylon.

[3] Jer. xxv. 26. See pp. 345, 406.

[4] Lit., "seized."

[5] Jer. li. 45-53.

[6] See ver. 43.

that had befallen our people; shame covered our faces; for aliens had entered the holy places of the House of Jehovah."

Wherefore, behold, days come, saith Jehovah, that I will bring punishment on the graven images of Babylon, and wounded men shall groan throughout all her land. Were Babylon to build its walls up to heaven, and to make its lofty defences seemingly impregnable, from Me shall come those that shall lay her waste, says Jehovah.

Hark! a cry from Babylon,[1] and great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans. For Jehovah lays Babylon waste, and hushes[2] the loud sound of her multitudes. For the waves of the conquering hosts assailing her, roar like the voice of many waters; the clamour of their awful tumult sounds abroad. For the destroyer is come up against her, against Babylon, and her braves are taken prisoners, and their bows broken by the foe; for the Lord Jehovah is an avenging God; He will repay her wickedness upon her. I will make drunk her princes, her Wise Men, her satraps, and governors, and fighting men; and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, from which they shall not wake, saith The King, whose name is Jehovah of hosts. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: The broad walls of Babylon[3] shall be levelled

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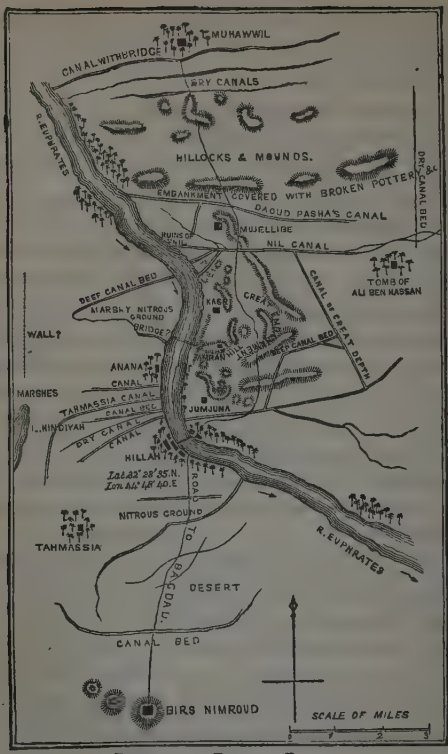
[1] Jer. li. 54–58. [2] Lit., "destroys."

[3] The walls of Babylon according to Herodotus (i. 178) were 50 cubits broad and 200 cubits high. Ctesias says they were 300 feet high; Strabo, that they were 50 cubits high and 32 feet broad. Duncker holds that the height and thickness of the walls in the estimate of Herodotus is doubtless exaggerated. Since the Median wall, the first line of defence of the land, was 100 feet high and 20 feet broad; and Xenophon saw walls 150 feet high in Nineveh, we may with some confidence accept Pliny's statement, that the walls of Babylon were 200 feet high from the fosses round them, and had a proportionate thickness of from 30 to 40 feet. The breadth was sufficient to allow four-horse chariots to pass each other on the top of the wall, inside the battlements, as Herodotus and Strabo relate. Three chariots could pass each other on the top of the walls of Nineveh. *Gesch. des Alt.* vol. i. pp. 856 ff. It must not, however, be thought that chariots actually ran, hither and thither, on the top of the walls. They, would have been of no use there. But there was room for them




PLAN OF THE RUINS OF BABYLON.

to have run, had the top of the walls been an ordinary street. Oppert has found that Babylon was surrounded with two walls, an outer and inner, and that the outer or great wall enclosed a space as great as the Department of the Seine (183 sq. m.), and the inner wall a space much larger than the whole size of London (117 sq. m.). Oppert, *Expédit. en Mésop.*, vol. i. pp. 220, ff.

to the ground, and her lofty gates[1] burnt with fire, so that the captive peoples who have built them shall have laboured for nothing, and the nations shall have only worn themselves out in creating what will be food for fire.[2]

Thus wonderfully was the fate of Babylon foretold, two generations before its fall; when, indeed, it was at the flood-tide of its glory![3]

The visit of Zedekiah to the Great City was paid not a moment too soon, for the agitation among the exiles on the Chebar was known to the Chaldean authorities, who had determined to suppress it by the sternest measures. It was found that the Jewish colony firmly believed that Nebuchadnezzar would soon be overthrown, and that Jehoiachin, thus set free, would return to Palestine at the head of his victorious people. Plots, to

[1] In the circuit of the wall were a hundred gates, all of brass with brazen lintels and side posts. *Herod.*, i. 179.

[2] A quotation from Habakkuk ii. 13.

[3] Chapters l. and li., containing so amazing a prediction, have, of course, been set down, by some ultra-rationalist critics, as the work of a later writer than Jeremiah. But they are expressly assigned to him in chap. li. 59. One objection made to their being his is the hostility he shows to the Chaldeans, but in chap. xxv. 12, 26, the same hostility is already expressed. Nor does it contradict this, that he speaks of the Chaldeans elsewhere as the instruments of Divine vengeance, to whom the Jews must yield. As to the style, no composition could more exactly resemble Jeremiah's. Nor would a writer during the Exile have written as in chap. l. 5, "With their faces *hitherward*," that is towards Jerusalem. Any one writing in Babylon would have said *thitherward*. An undesigned touch like this is most significant. It is said that the knowledge of Babylon shown by these chapters implies their composition by one familiar with that country. But in chap. xiii. it is expressly said that Jeremiah paid two visits to it—perhaps of long duration. Words are quoted as occurring which are of later date than Zedekiah's time; but this can be shown demonstrably to be an error in each instance.

which the magnates of Jerusalem were privy, were discovered. False prophets, both there and in Babylon, were stirring up the people, by raising false hopes of a speedy deliverance from Chaldean bondage or vassalage. Some of these on the Chebar were, therefore, seized as ringleaders of the popular disaffection, and two of them, at least, to spread terror among the exiles, seem to have suffered the fearful death of being roasted alive,[1] while it is probable that it was to this restlessness among his brethren that Jehoiachin owed the exceptional severity of his treatment. Not long after the return of Zedekiah from Babylon, an incident happened, ominous for his future relations to Nebuchadnezzar. The seething restlessness of the neighbouring states, under the Chaldean yoke, had at last led to their sending a joint embassy from Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, and the kings of Tyre and Sidon,[2] to Jerusalem, in the hope of inducing Zedekiah to enter into a league with them against the common enemy. What success they had is not recorded, though it is unlikely that the Jewish king committed himself, so early in his reign, by an act of open hostility to his master, especially in alliance with states which had for ages been the bitter foes of his race. The Egyptian party, no doubt, wished him to join them; but the voice of Jeremiah rose, to warn him from a step so fatal. Enforcing his words by a striking symbolical act, he procured a number of common ox yokes, and having put one on his own neck, to wear henceforth, apparently, while the embassy was in the city, he sent another to each of the envoys, desiring them to take them back with them to their respective countries, with the following message to their masters, from Jehovah.

[1] Jer. xxix. 22. [2] Jer. xxvii. 1-3.

[3] In verse 1, Jehoiakim is an error of some ancient copyist for Zedekiah.

Thus says Jehovah of hosts,[1] the God of Israel: Thus shall ye speak to your masters—I have made the earth, and man, and the beasts on the face of the earth, by My great power and My outstretched arm, and I give it to whom I see fit. And, now, I have given all these lands into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and the beasts of the field, also, have I given him, to serve him. And all nations shall serve him, his son, and his son's son, till the time of his own land comes, and, then, many nations and great kings shall make him *their* servant. And the nation and people that will not serve him, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, and that does not give its neck to his yoke, that nation I will punish with sword, famine, and pestilence, till I have consumed them by his hand. Do not listen, therefore, to your (false) prophets,[2] or diviners, or explainers of dreams, or dabblers in the black arts, or sorcerers, who say to you—"Ye shall *not* serve the king of Babylon!" They prophesy a lie to you, to make Me remove you far from your land, and drive you out, so that ye perish. But the people that gives its neck to the yoke of the king of Babylon and serves him, I will leave in their own land, says Jehovah, and they shall till it, and dwell in it.

About the same time the prophet addressed Zedekiah and the court in the same strain.

Bring your necks,[3] said he, into the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and you shall live. Why should you and your people die by the sword, famine, and pestilence, as Jehovah has said of the people that will not serve the king of Babylon. Do not listen to the words of the prophets who say to you—"Ye shall *not* serve the king of Babylon." They prophesy a lie to you! For I have not sent them, says Jehovah, but they prophesy falsely in My name, to make Me drive you out, and that you should perish, you, and the prophets who prophesy such words to you.

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[1] Jer. xxvii. 4–11.

[2] The heathen nations around had, thus, their own prophets; the order was not confined to the Jews. Balaam, of Pethor, on the Euphrates, is an instance of this.

[3] Jer. xxvii. 12-15.

The priests and all the people were no less faithfully warned.

Thus says Jehovah:[1] Listen not to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, saying,—"Behold, the vessels of the house of Jehovah will now be soon brought back from Babylon."[2] For they prophesy a lie to you. Listen not to them. Serve the king of Babylon and live. Why should this city be laid waste? If they *be* true prophets, and if the word of Jehovah be really in them, let them plead with Jehovah of hosts, that the vessels still left in the house of Jehovah, and in the palace of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem, do not also go to Babylon! For thus says Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, respecting the pillars, and the brazen sea, and the brazen stands for the ten lavers of the temple,[3] that remain in the city, which Nebuchadnezzar did not take when he carried off Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, to Babylon, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem; yea, thus says Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, respecting the vessels that remain in the house of Jehovah, and in the palace of the king of Judah, and in Jerusalem: They shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they remain till the day that I look after them, says Jehovah, and fetch them out to bring them back to this place.[4]

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[1] Jer. xxvii. 16-22.

[2] Those vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had carried off. 2 Kings xxiv. 13.

[3] The brazen frames on which were placed the lavers used for washing the sacrifices. 1 Kings vii. 27-37. 2 Chron. iv. 6.

[4] They were not carried to Babylon intact, but were broken up, for easier transport, Jer. lii. 17. But the brass or copper of which they were made, stored away in the treasure house of the king of Babylon, might well be among the vast gifts of the old sacred vessels, etc., taken by Nebuchadnezzar, and restored to the returning captives by Cyrus, Ezra i. 11. As to transport across the desert, and their removal to Babylon being impossible, as a recent critic maintains (*The Bible in the Jewish Church*, p. 116), it is enough to say, that Assurbanipal records that he carried two lofty obelisks from Thebes in Upper Egypt, to

The false prophets thus vigorously exposed, were naturally roused to violent opposition to Jeremiah.[1] One of their number indeed, Hananiah of Gibeon, a priest town, a little way north of Jerusalem, ventured some time in August, B.C. 594,[2] to contradict him in public before the priests and all the people. Such pretenders to revelation were among the hardest trials of their still faithful brethren,[3] and, in this case, when the fate of the nation trembled in the balance, the pain caused by their treacherous course was specially distressing. Using the very style of Jeremiah, his rival began:

Jehovah of hosts,[4] the God of Israel, has spoken thus—"I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon! Within two years' time I will bring back to this place all the vessels of the house of Jehovah, that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, took away from this place and carried to Babylon. And I will bring back to this place, Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, and all the captives of Judah that went to Babylon; for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon."

Jeremiah himself was among the crowd, and stepping out as soon as Hananiah had ended speaking,[5] addressed him aloud.

Amen! Jehovah do so![6] Jehovah establish your words which you prophesy about the bringing back again the vessels of the House of Jehovah, and all the captives, from Babylon to this place! ONLY—hear this word that I speak in your ears, and in the ears of all the people! Not I alone, but the prophets who have been before me, and before you, have prophesied, long ago, war, calamity,[7] pestilence against many countries and great king-

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Nineveh. What an obelisk weighs is easily imagined! See *Records of the Past*, vol. i. p. 67.

[1] Jer. xxviii. 1. [2] 5th month of 4th year, Jer. xxviii. 1.
[3] Jer. xxiii. 9; xxix. 8, 9; xxxi. 32. Ezek. xiii.
[4] Jer. xxviii. 2–4. [5] Jer. xxviii. 5.
[6] Jer. xxviii. 6–9. [7] "Famine," *Ewald*.,

doms. You, who prophesy peace, shall be known to be a prophet truly sent by Jehovah, when your word comes to pass.

But Hananiah was not to be silenced.[1] Snatching from the neck of Jeremiah the ox yoke he had put on when the embassy from Moab and other neighbouring kingdoms first came to Jerusalem, and still wore, he broke it across, and cried out as he held up the pieces:

Thus says Jehovah: Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, from the neck of all nations, within two years' time.

Disdaining further dispute before the crowd, Jeremiah now walked away. But he had no intention of letting Hananiah escape. Going to him privately, he told him, in the name of Jehovah, that he had broken a wooden yoke, only to prepare an iron one for the people, in its place. For Jehovah had said:

I have put a yoke of iron on the neck of all these nations, that they serve Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. And they *shall* serve him, and I have given him even the beasts of the field.

Then, addressing the pretended seer more directly, he added:

Hear now, Hananiah, Jehovah has not sent you, but you make this people trust in a lie! Therefore Jehovah speaks thus: Behold, I will send you forth from off the face of the earth, that is *My* prophecy in *your* case! This year you shall die, because you have spoken rebellion against Jehovah!

Two months later the impostor was dead.[2]

The prediction of Hananiah is a plain indication that secret negotiations, perhaps unknown to Zedekiah, or beyond his control, were already afoot between the

[1] Jer. xxviii. 10, 11.
[2] Jer xxviii. 1, comp. xxviii. 17.

Egyptian party in Judah and the court of Psammetichus. It is also clear that a strong feeling in favour of a league with the surrounding nations, against Chaldea, prevailed. The flattering assurance of the false prophet had been based on his sanguine confidence in the success of all this diplomacy. He had spoken simply from unreliable political calculations, but his words none the less paralysed the wise and patriotic efforts of Jeremiah. His sudden death, however, so soon after the prophet's denunciation, was not without effect. It appears to have decided Zedekiah, for the time, to resist the Egyptian party, and remain true to Nebuchadnezzar, to whom he had so recently done homage at Babylon. Terrified lest the report of the embassy from the neighbouring states to Jerusalem should prejudice his master against him, he resolved to send an embassy to his capital,[1] to explain the matter, and vindicate himself from any suspicion of disloyalty or treason. Awed by the judgment on Hananiah, he seems, moreover, to have sought to win the favour of Jehovah by a special gift to the temple of a set of silver vessels, to replace the golden ones that had been carried off by the Chaldeans.[2]

Ever eager to serve the true interests of his nation, Jeremiah gladly seized the opportunity of the embassy to Babylon, to warn the exiles of the folly and hopelessness of their schemes. This he did in a letter addressed to the elders, priests, and prophets among them, which ran thus:

Thus says Jehovah of hosts,[3] the God of Israel, to all the captives whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon. (Live no longer in tents) but build houses for yourselves, and live in them, and plant gardens and eat their produce, (Act as permanent inhabitants of the land, not as if soon to leave

[1] Jer. xxix. 3. [2] Bar. i. 8. [3] Jer. xxix. 1-7.

it.) Take wives and beget sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may increase there and not grow fewer. And seek the prosperity of the town to which I have caused you to be carried off,[1] for in its prosperity you will find your own.

For thus says Jehovah of hosts,[2] the God of Israel: Let not the prophets who are among you, and your diviners,[3] deceive you, and do not listen to your dreams, for which you so earnestly strive.[4] For they prophesy falsely to you in My name. I have not sent them, says Jehovah. For thus says Jehovah: I will visit you, first, only after seventy years for Babylon are ended, and will only then perform My good word toward you, to bring you back to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think respecting you, says Jehovah; thoughts of good and not of evil; to give you a future and a hope. Then (when the sufferings of your exile have taught you the knowledge of your sins) you will call upon Me, and go (to your house of prayer) and pray to Me, and I will hearken to you. And ye will seek and find Me, when ye seek Me with all your heart. And I will let Myself be found of you, says Jehovah, and I will bring the captives back again, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places to which I have driven you, says Jehovah; and I will bring you back again to the place from which I caused you to be carried away captive.

As to your saying, "Jehovah has raised up prophets to us in Babylon"[5]—(I know that they build great hopes on the present

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[1] Most of the exiles were settled in the open country, apparently; not in a town. But the chief men may have lived in some city.

[2] Jer. xxix. 8-14.

[3] The word is used in 1 Sam. xxviii. 8, of necromancer, but it means men who foretell in any heathen mode, by arrows, entrails, teraphim, or lots.

The most intense efforts were made, by sleeping in holy places, fasting, and keeping the mind fixed on special wishes, to induce dreams of the kind desired. See the case of King Assurbanipal. Lenormant's *Magie*, p. 135. Impostors also pretended to dream such dreams as their clients wished. This is perhaps alluded to in the text.

[5] Jer. xxix. 15.

continuance of the kingdom under Zedekiah), but, verily, thus says Jehovah of that king, who now sits on the throne of David, and of all the people that dwell in this city (Jerusalem), your brethren, who have not gone with you into captivity,—thus says Jehovah of hosts: Behold, I will send among them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and make them like vile figs, that cannot be eaten, they are so bad. And I will pursue those who flee with the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and give them over to ill-treatment[1] in all the kingdoms of the earth; and to be a curse, and an astonishment, and a hissing, and a scorn, among all the nations whither I have driven them. Because they hearkened not to My words, says Jehovah, which I sent to them by My servants the prophets, rising up early and sending. But they would not hear, says Jehovah.

Nevertheless, hear now, the word of Jehovah, all ye of the captivity, whom I have banished from Jerusalem to Babylon. Thus says Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, respecting Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, who prophesy lies to you in My name; Behold, I will give them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and he will slay them before your eyes. And all the exiles of Judah who are in Babylon will adopt a new form of curse from their fate, saying, "Jehovah make thee like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire"—Because they have committed lewdness in Israel, and have preached adultery with their neighbour's wives,[2] and have spoken lies in My name, which I did not command them to speak. But I know it, and am a witness, says Jehovah!

This letter created the greatest excitement among the mock prophets in Babylon.[3] It was an attack on the sacred order! It discredited its members in the public estimation, and threatened to be fatal to the plot from

[1] "Make them a plaything of the wind," *Ewald.* "Make them a shuddering." The word comes from a verb, "shake," "to agitate," "to tremble." *Cheyne*, "to disquiet, to maltreat."

[2] This may refer to going after their neighbour's gods. Perhaps, however, they may have been secretly immoral.

[3] Jer. xxix. 24–32.

which a speedy return of the exiles to their native land was hoped. Shemaiah,[1] one of these prophets, was especially indignant at Jeremiah's advice to build houses and live in them, and plant gardens and eat their produce; waiting patiently till the seventy years of their banishment had passed away. Unable to reach him otherwise, he vented his indignation in a fierce letter to Zephaniah, now the priestly commandant or chief officer of the temple,[2] copies of it being at the same time forwarded to the people of Jerusalem and to some of the ordinary priests.

"Jehovah," said this missive, "has made you priest instead of the priest Jehoiada, to be overseers in the House of Jehovah, charged, with respect to every madman who gives himself out as a prophet, to punish him by putting him in the five-holed stocks,[3] or by making him wear the heavy wooden collar.[4] Why, then have you not in this way rebuked the presumption of Jeremiah of Anathoth, who makes himself out to you to be a prophet?"

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[1] The Nehelamite = son of Nehelam, or inhabitant of Nehelam. But the name itself is otherwise unknown.

[2] Jer. xxi. 1. Pashur had held the office some time previously, Jehoiada had succeeded him, and now this Zephaniah held the post, which may have been tenable for only a year.

[3] Jer. xx. 1.

[4] The word is Tsinok, and seems to have been a heavy wooden collar which the sufferer had to carry about with him, as among the Arabs still. It makes escape impossible, from its weight and size. Burckhardt, *The Bedouins*, p. 420. Rüetschi thinks the Mahpecheth, which is by some supposed to have been a five-holed "stocks" in which the body was bent nearly double, was a contrivance in which the arms and legs were inserted crosswise, the name meaning "twisting." The Sad, Job xiii. 27, he believes to have been a pair of stocks in which both hands and feet, or even the neck also were inserted. *Herzog*, vol. iv. p. 703. See note, p. 319.

His special offence to the writer, that he had counselled the exiles to settle down contentedly in Babylon, was then detailed, and with this the letter closed.

Shemaiah had good reason to believe that this attack on the prophet would be successful, for Zephaniah, like himself, belonged to the anti-Chaldean party; his disloyalty to Nebuchadnezzar costing him his life, at Riblah, a few years later.[1] But in this case he acted honourably. Summoning Jeremiah before him, he read the letter to him, but took no action on it. Such an attempt to injure a true prophet was not, however, to be overlooked by the seer himself, and Shemaiah, to his horror, found, before long, that a counter letter, in reply to his fierce denunciation, had been sent back to the exiles, which marked him out as the object of Divine displeasure, and pronounced, in the name of Jehovah, a terrible punishment for his audacity.

"Thus says Jehovah," wrote Jeremiah, respecting him, "Because Shemaiah has prophesied to you, exiles, and I did not send him, and he caused you to trust in lies; therefore, thus says Jehovah: Behold I will punish him and his posterity. He shall have no man to dwell among this people, nor will he see the good that I shall prepare for My people, says Jehovah, because he has spoken treacherously respecting Jehovah!"

Equally vigorous resistance to the Egyptian, or war party, showed itself in the far distant settlement of the exiles on the Chebar. Jeremiah had sent his letter to them in the middle of the fourth year of Zedekiah.[2] A year later, about July, B.C. 593,[3] a new prophet—Ezekiel, "whom God strengthens"—was divinely commissioned at Tel Abib, on the Euphrates, to urge on his country-

[1] Jer. lii. 24, 27. 2 Kings xxv. 18, 21. [2] Jer. xxviii. 1.
[3] Ezek. i. 1, 2. Schrader says 594.

men there, the same counsels. Like Jeremiah, the new seer was the son of a priest. He had been carried off, as we have seen, at the deposition of Jehoiachin, and was now living with his wife, among the exile community, in a house of his own.[1] Of his life or work we know little. The few details left us show, however, that he found the career of a faithful prophet as painful on the Chebar as it had always been at Jerusalem, for the bitter hostility he had to endure from his fellow-countrymen is significantly compared to walking through briers and thorns, or living among scorpions.[2] To add to all this, his wife, to whom he was devotedly attached, died early,[3] under peculiarly distressing circumstances.

It may have been from this relentless opposition, and perhaps, also, from the circumspection needed under a government like that of Babylonia, that Ezekiel introduced a new practice—of collecting an audience round him in his own house, to hear his communications, instead of going to places of public concourse to harangue the multitude. The "elders," or chief men, gathered round him, from time to time, in his dwelling at Tel Abib, to hear his prophetic counsels, but the mass of the people seem to have paid little attention to him. When they did come to his small assemblies, he tells us, they appeared too often to have no motive but idle curiosity;[4] listening to his words for the sweetness of his voice, as one might listen to music, but paying no further heed to them.[5] With the changed times, the prophet was laying aside his public character, and passing gradually into the sacred writer, speaking to the world only indirectly.

[1] Ezek. iii. 24; viii. 1; xxiv. 18.
[2] Ezek. ii. 6.
[3] Ezek. xxiv. 16–18.
[4] Ezek. xxxiii. 30.
[5] Ezek. xxxiii. 32.

Trained as a priest, Ezekiel shows his early associations at once in the character of his visions, and in the culture of his style. Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah had taken a lively interest in the everyday affairs and passing moods of their fellow-countrymen. Their prophecies, or discourses, had been intensely practical; touching, each moment, every relation of public, social, and private life. Ezekiel, on the other hand, speaks and writes in a way of his own, which is in striking contrast to that of his predecessors. Retiring, and indisposed to the part of an orator, he was more at home as the venerable spokesman of a private group, than in the market place or the town gate. Fond of study, he shrank from noise and excitement. No other prophet shows so full an acquaintance with the older Hebrew literature, especially the Pentateuch; references to which pervade his whole Book. The language of Genesis respecting the creation of man are in effect repeated by him;[1] the garden of Eden is often mentioned;[2] the list of nations described in his account of Tyre is borrowed from the Table of Nations in the first book of the Bible;[3] the names of precious stones, which occur so often, are taken from the Pentateuch. The bounds of the Holy Land, which he gives in his great prophetic vision, are almost identical with those of the Book of Numbers.[4] A whole series of legal prescriptions, noticed in his prophecies, are quoted directly from the Pentateuch, as may be seen in any reference Bible. He shows his acquaintance with the prophecies of Hosea and Isaiah, but especially with those

[1] Gen. i. 28. Ezek. xxxvi. 11.
[2] Ezek. xxviii. 13; xxxi. 8; xxxvi. 34.
[3] Gen. x. Ezek. xxvii.
[4] Ezek. xlvii. 13 ff. Num. xxxiv.

of his elder contemporary Jeremiah,[1] freely using their terms of thought and phrases, as he does those of the Books of Moses. While, therefore, his genius shows itself in frequent passages of lofty sublimity or vigorous strength of expression, there is, on the whole, less originality and freedom of thought, than in the more illustrious of his prophetic brethren. Thus, even his great inaugural vision, grand as it is, recalls details of the temple with which as a priest he was familiar, and also of the vision of Isaiah,[2] while his picture of the future temple reminds us of the description of the building of the tabernacle, in Exodus.[3] The influences of his priestly training are, indeed, everywhere apparent, in contrast to the characteristics of Jeremiah, who, though also a priest, has no such professional colouring in his prophecies.

The explanation seems to lie in the different position of the two, in relation to the sacred institutions of their common religion. Far from the temple and its stated offerings; banished from the theocratic atmosphere of Jerusalem; Ezekiel could not, like Jeremiah, move and speak freely, with the consciousness that the symbols of the visible kingdom of God witnessed for themselves amidst the community. He could only betake himself to the regions of fancy and memory, and call up a vision of the temple, and its services he loved so well; now lost to him for ever. Nor did a general picture before his imagination content him. With a passionate devotion

[1] Ezek. xxxvii. 22. Hos. ii. 2. | Ezek. v. 15. Jer. xxiv. 9.
„ xxix. 6. Isa. xxxvi. 6. | „ vi. 11ff. }
„ viii. 12. „ xxix. 15. | „ xxix. 17ff. } „ xxiv. 7.
„ vii. 18. Jer. xlviii. 37. | „ xi. 19ff. }
And so on.

[2] Isa. vi. [3] Exod. xxv. ff.

to exactness in ritual that marks the character of his mind, he almost anticipates Ezra in the importance he attaches to the minutest ecclesiastical details.

How long Ezekiel continued his labours is not clear, nor is it known when he died. Twenty-seven years after leaving Jerusalem, he was still busily engaged in his mission as prophet,[1] but though this is the latest date in his Book, he may have lived and worked much longer. Tradition speaks of him as having been murdered by a Jewish noble whom he had offended, and a tomb said to be his, noted for a lamp kept continually burning, and for a copy of the prophecies said to be in his autograph, was seen by Benjamin of Tudela in the 12th century.[2]

[1] Ezek. xxix. 17.

[2] Layard visited this tomb, and found it only a plain building, without the ornaments or manuscripts it once contained. He quotes at length the description given by Benjamin of Tudela. *Nineveh and Babylon*, vol. v. p. 501.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### FIRST PROPHECIES OF EZEKIEL.

EZEKIEL had lived five years amongst his brethren at Tel Abib, his mind full, no doubt, of the concerns of Judah and Jerusalem, whose utter ruin seemed close at hand, through their restless plotting against Nebuchadnezzar. Around him the same violent political excitement was everywhere visible. Prophets, claiming to speak for God, openly predicted that Babylon would fall within the next two years, leaving the exiled Jews free to return in triumph to their own land.[1] The authorities had, indeed, executed some of these agitators, with fearful tortures, but their flattering promises were not the less eagerly cherished by the Hebrew community. Jeremiah's letter from Jerusalem, counselling contentment in Babylonia, as their home for the next seventy years, had failed to quiet the ferment of the general mind. Meanwhile the priest Ezekiel, far from the temple and its priestly employments, was engrossed by the religious interests of his people, recognising to the full, that their past calamities were due to their guilty faithlessness towards Jehovah. To lead them back to Him, and thus restore their glory as a nation by regaining His favour, was the thought of his life. His

[1] Jer. xxviii. 3.

heart cried out for God. The sanctuary on Zion being lost to them, he would fain bring back Jehovah to their midst by making their hearts His living temple. Communion with Him in His ancient oracles rounded the days and nights of His servant. The awful revelations of Sinai; the wonders wrought for Israel in Egypt, the wilderness, and the chosen land; His self disclosures in the temple on Mount Moriah, and His gracious communications through a long succession of prophets, were his absorbing meditation. Others might busy themselves with wild dreams of political changes, and a speedy return to Palestine; he lived in a higher sphere—in the spiritual presence of Jehovah and amidst the realities of eternity. Religious enthusiasm filled his soul as the flame fills the shining crystal of the lamp. To be near God himself, and to bring his people near Him, was his one overmastering passion.

Thus unconsciously prepared for Divine communications, he was quietly resting, perhaps in his house, possibly under his vine and fig-tree,[1] on some day in July,[2] a fiercely hot month in Babylonia—his mind filled to intensity with the high matters always engaging it—when suddenly the heavens seemed to open towards the dark and mysterious north, the region of tempests; ominous, to a few especially, as the region from which the judgments of God[3] on Israel had for centuries come.

[1] **Ezek. i. 1-18.** The year is spoken of as the 30th. But from what? Some say from the last jubilee; others, from the 18th year of Josiah's reign, when the Law was found and the Passover held. Others think it means the 30th year of the prophet's age.

[2] In the "4th month," Tammuz.

[3] The north was the land of darkness and mystery to the ancients, and as such, fittingly the region from which this mysterious vision appeared.

The sky grew black with clouds[1] driven before a mighty wind[2] and, in the midst of the darkness, lightnings quivered hither and thither, illuminating the storm with awful splendours, and casting a far spreading brightness around. Amidst the central glory, moreover, shone out an overpowering radiance as of mingled silver and gold,[3] and in this, as the tempest cloud came near, borne on the wings of the storm, four living creatures appeared, upright, and in outline like a man, but each with four faces—of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle; having four wings, with human hands beneath them, and feet like those of an ox, and like the feet of that creature, moving only straight forward, but shining like polished brass. Two wings of these mysterious forms were outstretched above; the two others covered their bodies beneath. Each Form, never turning aside, advanced in a straight line, with a swiftness like that of the lightnings round them. All, moreover, moved together, as by a common will; their appearance in keeping with the surrounding splendour, for they shone like glowing coals, or blazing torches, bright fire flashing between them, and lightnings darting from it.

Forthwith a new sight revealed itself. Four vast wheels, of awful height, appeared by the side of the four living creatures, bright, throughout, as the then famous precious stone of Tarshish—the topaz or chrysolite—their rims full, everywhere, of eyes. They, too, went straight forward, simultaneously, repeating each

[1] The word translated cloud in A. V. is from a verb "to cover"—and is collective in the sense of clouds covering the sky.

[2] The word comes from a verb "to rush" or "be tossed," as a tempest.

[3] Electron; a mixture of gold and silver, famous among the ancients.

movement of the four living forms, as if by the same impulse. At times on the earth, at others they rose into the air; now they stood, and then, again, they flashed on, like light.

But now a third wonder showed itself. A firmament of awful, glittering brightness, bent itself over the heads of the living creatures and over the wheels; the wings of the cherubim, underneath, sounding like the noise of many waters, or the voice of the Almighty itself, or the loud murmur of an army of men, as the vision swept on. Then, as in a moment, the whole stood still, and the wings of the cherubim were folded, at the command of a Voice from the firmament above them.

Presently, as if resting on these upper depths, a throne of sapphire stone was seen—the throne of the Eternal—and on it a form of a man, clothed to His loins with dazzling brightness, and thence, to His feet, with flaming fire; a mighty rainbow encircling the throne, above. It was "the appearance of the glory of Jehovah." Overwhelmed by a spectacle so transcendent in all its parts, Ezekiel seemed, in the vision, to fall on his face, but while thus prostrate, was roused by a command from the Eternal:[1] "Son of man, stand on thy feet, and I will speak to thee." With the words came power to obey them; his soul and body, which had well-nigh fainted, receiving strength to stand before the Almighty and listen to His communications, so that he found himself set once more upon his feet. Other words, meanwhile, fell on his ears, from Him who sat on the throne.

Son of man, I send thee to the sons of Israel; to the rebellious heathen (Israel), who have revolted from Me; who, like their fathers, have sinned against Me to this very day! They are

[1] Ezek. ii. 1-10.

sons hard of forehead and hard of heart. I send you to them, and you shall say to them, "Thus says the Lord Jehovah!" and thus, whether they hear or refuse to do so—for they are no longer the House of Israel, but the House of Disobedience—they shall know that a prophet has been among them!

But, as to yourself, O son of man! have no fear of them or of their words; though they be thorns and briers round you, and though, living amongst them, you live among scorpions! Have no fear of their words, and be not dismayed at their looks; for they are a House of Disobedience! But thou, son of man, Hear what I say to thee, and be not thou rebellious like that House of Disobedience! Open thy mouth and eat what I give you!

A hand now appeared, in the vision, stretched out to the prophet, holding the roll of a book, which, on being spread before him, seemed covered, on both sides, with lamentation, and mourning, and woe. Required to eat this,[1] he found it like honey in his mouth, for sweetness. The act was the symbol of his consecration as prophet. But, now, the Voice spoke once more.

Son of man![2] go, get you to the House of Israel, and speak My words to them. You are not sent to a people of dark speech and hard language, but to the House of Israel; nor to many peoples of dark speech and hard language, whose words you could not understand. I have sent you, on the contrary, to these, thy countrymen, who can understand you. But the House of Israel will not listen to you, because they will not listen to Me. For the whole House of Israel are hard of forehead and hard of heart!

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[1] "To eat" is a common Eastern phrase for receiving, accepting, and the like. The Hindoos still speak of "eating blows, grief, wounds, and so on." *Six Years in India*, pp. 107, 120, 131, 193. Nothing is more common, says Lightfoot, in the schools of the Jews, than the phrase of eating and drinking, in a metaphorical sense. *Horæ Heb.*, vol. iii. p. 387. See Rev. x. 9. Jeremiah (xv. 16) speaks of eating the Divine words.

[2] Ezek. iii. 1-11.

(But I will make you able to meet their defiance with defiance!) Behold I make your face as hard as their faces, and your forehead as hard as their foreheads. I make your forehead like adamant, which is harder than flint stones. Have no fear of them; and be not dismayed at their looks, for they are a House of Disobedience.

A pause followed, and then the Voice resumed.

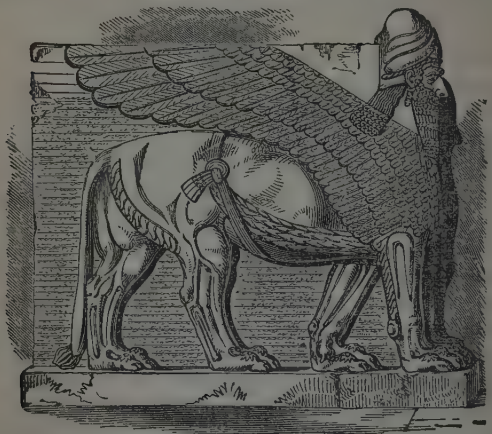
Son of man! take into your heart, and hear with your ears, all the words that I say to you, and go, get you to the Captivity, the children of your people, and say to them "Thus says the Lord Jehovah"—whether they hear or refuse to listen.

The wondrous vision was now about to close. Ezekiel had received his Divine commission. But its close was sublime. The Spirit, he tells us,[1] seemed to come on him again, and bear him from the imaginary scene, to the midst of his fellow-captives at Tel Abib, the voices of the living creatures breaking forth like the sound of rolling thunder, in high worship of God, as the vision faded in the distance, his ear catching from their hymn of adoration the words, "Exalted be the majesty of Jehovah!" The sound of their wings, as they disappeared, and of the living wheels at their side, like the noise of many waters, presently died away, and the prophet woke to find himself once more in his home at Tel Abib. But the strain on his whole nature had its effect. A reaction followed. The words in which the wickedness of his people had been rebuked, filled him with mingled grief and indignation; while the awful splendours of the Divine manifestation left him so weak and prostrate that a week elapsed before he in a measure came to himself.

This vision stands alone for mysterious sublimity. Clear in its great lessons of the omniscience, omnipotence, and majesty of Jehovah, it is confessedly beyond any

[1] Ezek. iii. 12-14. Keil has "wind" for "spirit,"—the word means both.

satisfactory explanation in its details. The difficulty of adequately comprehending it—a feature marking other portions of Ezekiel—has always been felt, and early led the Jews to place the book among those "treasures"[1] not to be read by any below the age of thirty.[2] Much, however, may be learned, even from a vision so mysterious, as to the relations between the natural and divine in inspiration. The source of many of its most striking



THE ASSYRIAN GOD ADRAMMELECH, from one of the Palace Gates, Nineveh. Known also as Annamelech, or Kewan, the planet Saturn. It is called in the inscriptions, "the Possessor of Power," the Warrior," "the God of Battles," "the Bearer of the Bow," "the Lord of Fire." The people of Sepharvaim offered their children to it, burning them alive.

features can be easily traced. Jehovah had descended on Sinai amidst thunders, and lightnings, and tempest, as He now approached from the North. The fiery cloud

Genazim. They included also the first chapters of Genesis and the Canticles.

[2] Jer., *Ep. ad Eustochium.*

had its prototype in that which hung over the tabernacle; winged creatures overshadowed the shrine in some Egyptian temples,[1] and in Solomon's temple two cherubim bent over the mercy seat, while two others, of gigantic size, stood at the sides of the Holy of Holies. In Babylonia, moreover, the notice of the prophet must have been arrested by the constant recurrence of huge forms of winged beings, uniting the most opposite features. Winged bulls, lions, and eagles, on every side, guarded the entrances to the palaces and temples of Babylon. Seen for the first time by the exiles, on their arrival at Babylonia, they must have struck with special awe men coming from a land where all sculpture was prohibited, and where even the idols introduced in violation of their sacred law, were human in shape, with the exception, perhaps, of the ox-headed Moloch. Forms in all respects similar to the cherubim of Ezekiel's vision would not meet the eye of the prophet, but he would have before him gigantic creations, with the face of a man, the wings of an eagle, and the body of a lion or a bull. That these should have associated themselves in his mind with a vision of the majesty of Jehovah, was only in keeping with a law of revelation and of our intellectual nature. We can only conceive of the unknown from the known. We may enlarge or combine the elements we have, but we have no power of creating imaginations out of nothing. Hence the inspired writers in all ages availed themselves of facts and imagery with which they were familiar. The usages and symbols of Egypt mark the earlier books of the Pentateuch. In Palestine, the figures and metaphors of the sacred writers are derived from things round them; and, in the same way, in Babylonia, they used their

[1] See illustration in Wilkinson's *Ancient Egyptians*.

Chaldean experiences. Indeed, the very word cherub is only the Assyrian *Kirub*.

The symbolism of Ezekiel, as contrasted with that of the earlier Scriptures, is nevertheless significant. At Sinai, his forefathers "saw no similitude" of God. But living, as he did, amidst gigantic human figures of gods, shining in golden splendour, we have, for the first time, in his vision, a form assigned to Jehovah, as if, by gathering round Him a splendour compared with which that of the idols grew pale, he would lift the thoughts of his countrymen to His infinitely transcendent glory, and yet utilize the impressions made on their minds by the religion of the locality. It will be remembered that in this he was followed by Daniel,[1] writing amidst the same influences. He also uses imaginary beings, as symbols, in his visions.[2]

It need hardly be said, that the scenery of a vision or waking dream can be only a picture of the brain. No one has ever fancied that any class of the blessed spirits before God have really such forms as Ezekiel describes. He simply adopted the materials which he found employed around him by degrading superstition, and through them, transferred the same ideas of guardianship to the throne of heaven, purifying these, as he did so, from the taint of all lower associations. That they are only symbols, is shown, indeed, very strikingly by the fact that whereas, in one passage, the face of one of the four living creatures is said to have been that of an ox, in another it is described as that of a cherub.[3] It is singular and noteworthy, moreover, that a picture on an Assyrian cylinder, now in the British Museum,[4] presents a strange analogy to the details of the cherubic vision of Ezekiel.

[1] Dan. x. 9. [2] Dan. vii. 3 ff. [3] Ezek. i. 10; x. 14.

[4] Figured in Tomkins's *Life and Times of Abraham*, Plate III. figure x.

A mysterious vessel floats on waves expressed by undulating lines. It ends, at its prow and poop, in a human form, extending downwards to the waist. On the vessel itself two Kerubim, or winged bulls, stand back to back, and turn human faces to the spectator, their position involving the presence of two others behind them, to bear up the four corners of a flat surface which rests on their shoulders, and possibly corresponds to Ezekiel's firmament. From this rises a throne on which is seated a bearded god, clothed with a long and gorgeous robe, his head surmounted by a Babylonian tiara, and his extended hand holding a sceptre and a large circle or ring, which is without ornament. A smaller human figure, clothed with a long robe, stands before the god, to receive his commands—his angel, or *malach*, to use the Hebrew word; his *schickkal*, in the phrase of Assyria. He is the intermediary through whom mortals must approach the divinity,[1] Overhead, at the sides, are two crescents, as if indications of heavenly bodies, and above these there still remain portions of an arch, which may have been the counterpart of Ezekiel's rainbow.

The human-headed bulls of Assyria and Babylon were set up, as has been said, at the gates of palaces and temples, as guardian genii, to watch over the buildings within, and keep back all forbidden persons. They were regarded as alive; a spirit being supposed to dwell in the huge stone forms. Similar existences, in living bodies, not prisoned in stone, were believed to guard the gates of the heavenly palaces of the gods, and those of the lower regions; these latter subterrestial beings bearing up the earth on their backs, and guarding the entrance

[1] Fried. Delitzsch compares this figure to the man clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn at his side, who carried out Jehovah's commands. Ezek. ix. 3. *Wo lag das Paradies?* p. 151.

to the kingdom of the dead; as keepers of which they were the objects of prayer.[1]

For seven days after the vision, Ezekiel tells us, he could do nothing, but sat among his people at Tel Abib, in lonely and desolate grief, like one mourning; his mind overwhelmed, for the time, alike by the awful vision he had seen and the greatness of the responsibility laid on him by his Divine commission as a prophet. Only at the end of a full week—the usual duration of excessive mourning[2]—was his silence disturbed, and then by the voice of God speaking in the stillness of his spirit. He had been set apart as the public servant of Jehovah, but he might not have fully realized what his office implied. Before he went forth to his brethren, Jehovah would have him feel its awful sacredness. Appointed to the ministry of His word among men, the interests of the souls of his hearers were entrusted to him. Let him ponder what it implied! Would that all who have the

WINGED GENIUS, FROM THE TOMB OF CYRUS, AT MURGAB, THE ANCIENT PASARGADÆ. It has the head-dress and the ram's horns of the Egyptian god, Kneph, or Amon. Over it is the inscription, "I am Cyrus, the king, the Achæmenian." It is a portrait of Cyrus, deified. The inscription is in the three forms of cuneiform writing.—Justi, *Geschichte des Alten Persiens*, p. 47.

[1] On the whole subject of the cherubim, see Lenormant, *Les Origines de l'Histoire*, pp. 113–127. Dillmann, art. *Cherub*, in *Bib. Lex.* Fried. Delitzsch, *Wo lag das Paradies?* pp. 150–155. Kurtz, art. *Cherubim*, in *Herzog.*

[2] Job ii. 13.

cure of souls in our own day took to themselves the warnings, uttered more than 2,000 years ago on the banks of the Chebar!

Son of man![1] [spoke the Voice], I have appointed thee a watchman to the House of Israel: hear, then, the word from My mouth, and warn them from Me. When I say to the wicked, "Thou shalt surely die!" and you do not warn him (that I have done so), or speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, so that he may save his life, that wicked man shall die for his sin; but I will demand his blood from *you*.[2] But if you have warned a wicked man, and he does not turn from his wickedness and his evil way, he will surely die for his sin; but you have saved your soul. And, if a righteous man fall from his righteousness, and commits iniquity, and I cast a stumbling block before him, and he die; if you have not warned him, he, indeed, will die for his sin, and his righteous deeds will be forgotten; but I will demand his blood from *you!* But if you have warned a righteous man to keep from sin, as becomes a righteous man, and he does keep from it, he shall assuredly live because he has been warned, and you will have saved your own soul!

Thus cautioned, Ezekiel seems to have gone forth among the Hebrew community, as his order had always done, to urge on them the necessity of repentance and better life, and to disenchant them of the idle dream that they would soon return to Judah, and find Jerusalem as they had left it. That they would remain in Babylonia seventy years, and that the Holy City would assuredly be destroyed for its sins, was, we may be assured, the burden of his addresses. But he spoke to men who bitterly resented predictions opposed to their cherished desires. The bitterness and glowing indignation of his soul[3] at their ungodliness, which doubtless showed itself in his words and tone, instead of subduing them, only raised

[1] Ezek. iii. 15–21. [2] Lit., "from, or at your hand."
[3] Ezek. iii. 14.

fierce opposition, before which he was powerless. It was impossible for him to get a hearing. So far as public appearances were concerned, he could do nothing. Utterly discouraged, and at a loss how to fulfil his duty hereafter, he could only wait directions from God. Nor were those long withheld. While his soul still glowed with overpowering excitement at all the incidents of the recent past, a command came from Jehovah[1]—how recognised as such is not said—that he should go out from among the dwellings of men, to a valley at hand, and await Divine instructions. In this lonely spot the glory of Jehovah once more suddenly shone before him, resplendent as it had been on the banks of the Chebar, and, as then, he fell on his face to worship. Presently, however, he was raised and set on his feet by the same Divine power as in the former vision, and received orders to desist, henceforth, from any attempt to speak in public, except when specially directed to do so. From this time he was to stay quietly in his house. His brethren would not hear him, but by their resolute opposition would, as it were, lay chains on him, and bind him to the seclusion of his home. He was therefore to be silent, and cease from reproving them, because they were a House of Disobedience! Yet, when Jehovah opened his mouth, he was to go boldly among them, and tell them, "Thus says the Lord Jehovah," and he that heard might hear, and he that refused might refuse. From this time, therefore, till nearly the close of his prophecies,[2] we hear of no public activity on the part of the prophet, though he is often spoken of as announcing the word of God to those who came to him to hear it.[3]

The symbolical acts, parables, proverbs, poems, alle-

[1] Ezek. iii. 22-27. [2] Ezek. xxxiii. 22; comp. xxiv. 27.
[3] Ezek. viii.-xi. 12; xiv. 17; xviii. 20; xxi. 5, 12; xxiv. 18 ff.

gories, and direct prophecies, which constitute the remainder of his Book, must hence be conceived, for the most part, as communicated at first, only to the small groups who, from time to time, gathered in the house of the prophet. His life, in fact, was spent in private. Abroad, among men, he was but a citizen; only in the privacy of his dwelling was he a preacher.

The earliest instance left us of this quiet but effective activity shows that Ezekiel was in intense sympathy with Jeremiah, and offered unbending opposition to the ideas of his brethren in Babylon, as to their speedy return to Palestine. Symbolical actions, as we have seen, were not uncommon among the prophets, but with none were they so frequent as with Ezekiel. To impress on his neighbours the certain destruction of Jerusalem, in the face of all the predictions of the false prophets, he was directed[1] to represent the siege of Jerusalem, and all its miseries, by a series of emblematic actions. He was to take one of the common sun-dried bricks, of which nearly all the buildings around him were made, and draw on it the picture of Jerusalem, with all the circumstances of a siege; to raise works around the walls; to picture the usual wooden towers overlooking them; the huge mounds of earth enclosing the ramparts, from which the besiegers could assail the defenders; the encampments and attacking hosts; and the battering rams, to make breaches in the fortifications. This done, he was to set before the brick, the iron baking-plate of the household, to represent a wall of iron encircling the city and making escape hopeless, while he, himself, as the prophet and representative of Jehovah, was to press the siege. Seen by those who came to his house, it would, through them, be a sign to the Hebrew community at large.

[1] Ezek. iv. 1-3.

To this strange illustration of acted prophecy another was soon added.[1] To represent the wretched condition of the city, thus shut up, and the sufferings which Israel as a whole, in its twelve tribes, must bear, for their sins, he was directed to lie on his bed, like one chained to it by sickness or force; keeping himself for 390 days on his left side, to indicate, by a day for a year, the duration of the punishment of the Ten Tribes; and then 40 days on his right side, to symbolize as many years of visitation on the House of Judah; "setting his face," meanwhile, towards the pictured siege of Jerusalem, and baring his arm to indicate unimpeded action. In each case the iniquity of his brethren was to be assumed as metaphorically laid upon him. Such directions must not, however, be understood as required to be literally carried out by the prophet, for he could not have been called upon to endure the torture of never turning from one side for thirteen months together; an infliction inevitably fatal to any one, though God, of course, could have strengthened him to bear it. The whole must rather be taken as a parable, enacted from time to time, before the companies met at his house, and explained as the Divine intimation had directed.[2] To attempt to solve the full meaning of the symbolism is, however, a task, in which scholars have never agreed. The numbers given may have been clear to contemporaries, but to later ages they have only enforced Jerome's comparison of the prophet's writings

[1] Ezek. iv. 4–8.

[2] Cornelius a Lapide says: "The prophet cannot be understood to have lain in bed for 390 days, but lay down awake, as if besieging, or rather looking at the siege of, the city." Fairbairn says: "Few will be disposed to doubt that the successive actions took place only in vision." Ezekiel, moreover, is represented as *sitting* in his house before the days of his *lying* in bed could have been completed. Chap. viii. 1.

to a "hopeless maze," "a labyrinth of the mysteries of God," or to the inextricable windings of the catacombs under Rome. Even the Jews, indeed, early despaired so utterly of solving such dark questions, that they were inclined to exclude Ezekiel from the canon, had not Rabbi Chananiah, as the legend says, finally reconciled all discrepancies, and illuminated all difficulties, though at the cost of studies so protracted as to have required for his midnight lamp no fewer than 300 skin-bottles of oil.[1] One reference, however, of the 390 and 40 days—about 14 months[2]—seems clear, for they are expressly named

[1] *Shabbath*, fol. 13, col. 2. The skin-bottle was the entire skin of a sheep or goat sewed together and made into a bottle or hanging jar.

[2] As it may interest readers to have some of the countless explanations given of the 390 and 40 years, I append the following.

1. THEODORET follows the reading of the *Sept.*, which gives 150 days instead of 390, but retains the 40, making altogether 190. The 40 years he takes to be 40, yet wanting, of the 70 of the captivity of Judah; 30 years of it, in his opinion, having already passed. He reckons the period from the first prophesying of Ezekiel to the reign of Cyrus as 40 years! The 150 are obtained by running on to the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, in which Theodoret tells us Jerusalem was fully rebuilt.

2. Taking the numbers in the Hebrew Text—390 and 40=430—the following solutions among others have been offered. Some, says Jerome, thought the 430 years mean the period from the baptism of Christ to the end of the world. Others, especially Jews, he tells us, reckoned from the second year of Vespasian, when the temple was destroyed, supposing that 430 years of misery and captivity must be fulfilled by Israel, from that date, and thought that then the chosen people would be restored, as they of old were 430 years in Egypt (Exod. xii. 40).

3. EPHRAEM SYRUS reckons the 430 years from the first year of Solomon to the eleventh of Zedekiah, when the temple was burnt; a period, he says, of 433 years and 6 months.

4. JEROME reckons from the twentieth year of Pekah, in which

"the days of the siege" of Jerusalem, which, in fact, lasted nearly 18 months, including the time during

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he tells us Tiglath Pileser carried off the first captives from the Northern Kingdom. From this to the burning of the temple under Zedekiah he counts 164 years. Add 70 years for the Captivity, and we have 234 years. From this to the last year of Ahasuerus he counts 155 years and 4 months, and these added to the 234 years, make 389 years and 4 months. The 40 years he obtains "easily." From the reign of Jehoiachin to that of Cyrus is, as he calculates, just that period!

5. The later Rabbis reckon the 390 years from the entry of the Israelites into Canaan, giving 151 years to the Judges and 241 to the Kings of Israel, from Jeroboam to Hosea. 151+241=392. But they deduct the last year of Hosea, because he had been carried off from Samaria. The 391 left are reproduced by the round number 390. The 40 years are obtained by counting the first 16 years of Manasseh, during which idolatry was rampant, and then adding 24 as embracing the period from king Amon to the burning of the temple, the good reign of Josiah being passed over.

6. Others calculate the period from Jeroboam to the destruction of the temple as 390 years, and the 40 years from the thirteenth year of Josiah, in which Jeremiah began to preach, to the burning of the temple.

7. Our ordinary chronology gives a period of 390 years from Rehoboam to the burning of the temple, B C. 977–587.

The 40 years in the wilderness are thought by not a few to have been in the mind of Ezekiel in speaking of Judah, but I do not myself see the connection. 390 added to 40 make 430, the length of the sojourn in Egypt. Exod. xii. 40, 41. Gal. iii. 17.

Rosenmüller (*Scholia in Ezek.*, pp. 107–117), gives extracts from the Fathers from which I have condensed these memoranda. His own explanation is ingenious. He finds the 390 *years* in the period from Rehoboam to the burning of the temple under Zedekiah; the 390 *days*, as follows. From the 4th of the 9th month, in which the siege began (2 Kings xxv. 1; Jer. xxxix. 1; lii. 4) to the 4th of the 9th month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, on which it ended (2 Kings xxv. 3; Jer. xxxix. 2; lii. 6), are 530 days of a lunar year. From this he deducts 100 days,

which the Chaldeans interrupted it, to march against the Egyptian army.[1]

A third symbolical act of the prophet set forth the extremities to which Jerusalem would be reduced in the siege,[2] and the bitterness of the years of exile. He was to take grain and leguminous food of all kinds, from the best to the poorest—wheat, barley, beans, lentiles, millet, and vetches, and mixing them all, make bread of them for the 390 days of the typical siege. Such food was in itself unclean, by the mixture of which it was made; a very serious matter to a strict priest like Ezekiel.[3] Of this he was to eat only the weight of twenty shekels, or 12 oz. troy, a day, while the water he was to drink daily was to be only the sixth of a hin, or a pint and a half;[4] terribly little in so warm a climate. The utter want of all firing in Jerusalem during the siege, was to be indicated by the most revolting materials being used to bake the bread of each day. In treeless regions like the deserts of Africa or Arabia, or the steppes of Asia, the dried dung of sheep, goats, camels, or oxen, is the ordinary fuel,[5] supplemented, as far as possible, by any stalks or weeds obtainable. Cowdung made into cakes and dried in the sun is, indeed, still used by the very poor in Palestine. But a fire even of such squalid materials was to be represented as beyond the means of the besieged, and Ezekiel was to prepare his pittance,

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as the time during which the Chaldeans intermitted the siege, when marching against the Egyptian army, and thus gets 430, which includes the 390 of Israel, and the 40 of Judah. This 430, he notices, was the time assigned to the stay of the Hebrews in Egypt.

[1] Jos., *Ant.*, X. viii. 1.
[2] Ezek. iv. 9-17.
[3] Lev. xix. 19.
[4] Conder's *Handbook*, p. 81.
[5] Layard's *Nineveh and Babylon*, p. 288.

by laying it in the ashes of a much more offensive fire, as "barley cakes" were usually baked.[1] Thus would the Hebrews, he was divinely told, "eat defiled and abominable bread, among the heathen nations to whom they would be driven," as had been foretold already by Amos and Hosea.[2] But the very thought of Levitically polluting himself, even by a symbolical act, was intolerable to the priestly feelings of the prophet. It would not defile him to eat bread baked with the dried dung of oxen or other animals, for the ashes of such fuel in no way affect what is baked in them by it, but bread made as proposed would be "unclean." "Ah Lord Jehovah," cried he, therefore, in distress, "behold, my soul has not hitherto been defiled by my eating anything ceremonially unclean; for from my youth up, I have never eaten the flesh of that which died of itself, or had been torn in pieces by wild beasts; nor has any unclean flesh come into my mouth."[3] Fuel of cowdung, such as was common, was, in consequence, substituted, and the solemn words added, that Jehovah would break the staff of bread in Jerusalem; bread, like the staff in a man's hand, being that on which the city leaned for support. Their bread would be eaten by weight, and their water measured out to them, and drunk in terror, to let them pine away for their iniquity.

Still another sign, however, was to be given,[4] that by

[1] 1 Kings xvii. 12. Isa. xliv. 15. Jer. vii. 18.

[2] Amos vii. 17. Hosea ix. 3.

[3] To speak thus, Ezekiel must have been well acquainted with the Levitical legislation, contrary to the new criticism, which supposes it was not invented till after his day. See Lev. xvii. 15. Exod. xxii. 30. Deut. xiv. 21. Lev. v. 2; vii. 24; xxii. 8; xi. 39 ff; vii. 18; xix. 7; xxvi. 26, 39. These laws must, moreover, have been rigidly observed by strict Jews. So much for the late origin of the Pentateuch.

[4] Ezek. v. 1–4.

one or other, the dark prospect before both the exiles and Judah, might be realized. Ezekiel was to take a barber's knife, and shave off his hair and his beard. Himself representing the city, his hair was to stand for its inhabitants, and its being cut off, the shame and ruin before Jerusalem.[1] The hair, moreover, was to be destroyed in various ways, to show the different modes in which the Divine judgments were to strike the guilty people. A third part was to be burnt with fire, in the midst of his picture of the city, when the days marking the duration of the siege were over; a third was to be cut to pieces; and the last third to be scattered in the wind. A few hairs only, and these counted, so few their number, were to be bound up in his skirts, but even of them, he was afterwards to burn some. Then came the solemn words:—

Thus saith the Lord Jehovah;[2] This is the fate of Jerusalem. I have set her in the centre of the nations, and of their lands round about it.[3] But she has wickedly rebelled against My laws more than the heathen,[4] and against My statutes more than the lands round about her; for her people have despised My laws, and as to My statutes, they have not walked in them!

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[1] 2 Sam. x. 4. Isa. vii. 20. [2] **Ezek. v. 5, 6.**

[3] The Jews believed from this verse that Jerusalem was the centre of the world (Buxtorff, *Lex. Chal.*, p. 854), as the Greeks supposed of Delphi, the seat of Apollo. Cic., *De Divinat.*, ii. 56. Ovid., *Metam.*, x. 167. Theodoret dwells on this imaginary fact in his commentary on the text. See also, Reland's *Palestine*, Bk. I. chap. x., and Jarchi on this place. A spot fancied to be the centre of the world is still shown in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. The Arabs think Mecca the centre of the world, and the Parsi fancies the sacred mount Albirsch has the honour of being so. See Gesenius, *Jesaia*, vol. i. p. 179.

[4] She has wickedly exchanged My laws for those of the nations. *Ewald.*

Therefore thus says the Lord Jehovah:[1] Because you have been much worse in your rebelliousness than the heathen nations round about you;[2] because you have not walked in My statutes, nor kept My laws, but have done according to the laws of the heathen nations round you—therefore, thus says the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I, even I, am against thee, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee, before the eyes of the nations. I will do in thee what I have never done, and the like of which I will never again do, because of all thy abominations! Fathers will eat their children in the midst of thee, and children will eat their fathers, and I will execute judgments on thee, and scatter[3] all that remain of thy people to the four winds![4]

As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah[5]—because thou, Jerusalem, hast polluted my sanctuary with all thy detestable idols, and all thy abominations of heathenism, I will, assuredly, shear thee away, as My prophet's hair has been shorn off;[6] My eye will not spare, nor will I have any pity! A third part of thee will die of the plague, and be consumed by famine, in the midst of thee; a third part will fall by the sword that shall be round about thee; and the last third will I scatter to all the winds, and unsheathe a sword behind them. Thus will I exhaust my indignation upon her, and then, first, when My fury has fallen on them,[7] will I feel satisfied,[8] for they will then know that I, Jehovah, spoke in earnest,[9] when I have spent My fury on them!

Thus, O Jerusalem,[10] will I make thee a waste, and a mockery among the nations round about thee, before the eyes of all that pass by. And thou shalt be a contempt and a reviling, an example, and an astonishment, to the nations round about thee, when I execute judgments on thee, in anger and in wrath, and in the chastisements of My fury. I, Jehovah, say it! Yes! I

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[1] Ezek. v. 7-10.

[2] Because ye have reckoned yourselves as among the nations. *Ewald*, from *Peshito*.

[3] As men throw abroad the chaff with a winnowing shovel, on the threshing floor on the top of windy hills.

[4] Lit., "to all the winds." [5] Ezek. v. 11-13.

[6] The verb means primarily, "to scrape off," "to shave off."

[7] Or, cooled itself on them. [8] Lit., "be comforted."

[9] Lit., "in zeal." [10] Ezek. v. 14-17.

will send the deadly arrows of famine among them, which will destroy them, for I send them for that purpose; famine on famine will I bring on you, and break your staff of bread! Famine and wild beasts will I send among you, to make you childless! pestilence and blood will assail you, and I will bring the sword on you! I, Jehovah, have said it!

# CHAPTER XX.

## THE FIRST YEARS OF THE EXILE.

THE first twenty-four chapters of Ezekiel throw much light on the state of things among the exiles in Babylonia, in the years preceding the siege of Jerusalem. A close connection was kept up between them, and the capital. Constant communications passed and repassed,[1] and the tenderest mutual sympathy bound together the widely separated communities. On the banks of the Chebar, the banished Hebrews seemed to think, or speak, only of the hills and valleys of Judah, the final and utter desolation of which they could not bring themselves to believe. Jehovah would surely appear to save Israel, His firstborn,[2] from the oppressor!

It was given to Ezekiel, as the mouthpiece of God, to dispel this illusion, time after time, by earnest assurances that they were deceiving themselves with false hopes, and that, instead of triumph, the most terrible doom hung

[1] Travelling seems to have been quite safe under the Chaldeans. See p. 377. It had been the same under the Assyrians. Thus, in the reign of Assurbanipal, a man appeared in Nineveh in strange dress, speaking a language no one understood, and it was only found out after some days that he was an ambassador from the distant kingdom of Lydia, in Asia Minor. Smith's *Assyria*, p. 147.

[2] Exod. iv. 22.

over the community in Palestine. That of Jerusalem he had already proclaimed in a succession of prophetic acts, which brought it before their own eyes, as it were, by the most vivid symbols; but Judah, as a whole, had hitherto escaped. Soon, however, it also had to be bewailed, as destined to a fate equally sad. To Ezekiel it must have been distressing in the extreme to have to utter such dismal predictions of ruin; but, like Jeremiah, he had no choice, when the commission to do so came from above. The following is the first prophecy in which the Jewish state as a whole was set before the exiles of Chebar, as under sentence of final destruction.

Son of man,[1] set thy face against the mountain of Israel and preach against them,[2] and say—Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord Jehovah! Thus says the Lord Jehovah to the mountains and to the hills, to the torrent beds and the valleys,—Behold, I will bring war against you, and will destroy your idolatrous high places.[3] And your altars shall be laid desolate; your sun-pillars shall be broken; and I will cast down your slain men before your disgusting gods,[4] lay the carcases of the sons of Israel before them,[5] and scatter their bones round your altars! Wherever you live, your towns shall be laid waste, and the high places made desolate, that your altars may be left without drink offerings[6] and forlorn, and your disgusting idols be broken and cease, and your sun-pillars cut down, and the images, the work of your hands, destroyed! And the slain will fall in your midst, and ye shall know that I, Jehovah, have spoken.[7] When those of you who have escaped the sword shall

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[1] Ezek. vi. 1–10.

[2] "Thou hast appointed prophets to *preach* of thee, etc." Neh. vi. 7.

[3] They had raised them again since they had been destroyed by Josiah. See Deut. xii. 2. Lev. xxvi. 30.

[4] Lit., "dung gods." *Mühlau und Volck.* For "disgusting gods," the reader may substitute "dung gods," throughout.

[5] *Smend. Henderson.* [6] Lit., "dry."

[7] Eichhorn, Ewald, and Smend, join the first word of ver. 8

be among the nations; when ye are scattered through the countries, and your fugitives think of Me among the heathen, whither they have been carried captive; when their unfaithful hearts, which have departed from Me, shall feel broken, and their eyes which lusted after their disgusting gods; when they shall loathe themselves in their own sight[1] for the wickedness which they have committed before all their abominable idols—then they will know that I, Jehovah, have not spoken vainly, when I threatened to do evil to them!

Thus says the Lord Jehovah:[2] Smite your thigh with your hand, and stamp with your foot, to show your indignation![3] and say: "Alas for all the abominations of the House of Israel!" For they shall fall by the sword, the famine, and the pestilence. He that is far off will die by the pestilence; he that is near, by the sword; and he that is left, and he that is besieged, shall die by the famine; and I will exhaust My fury on them, that they may know that I am Jehovah! When your slain lie among your disgusting gods, round about your altars, on every high hill, on the top of the mountains, and under every green tree and every thick leaved oak—where they offered fragrant incense to all these disgusting gods—when I stretch out My hand upon them and make the land waste and desolate, from the wilderness in the south, to Riblah on the north[4]—then shall they know that I am Jehovah!

That preaching like this, though only heard at first by the small audiences in the prophet's own dwelling, should have remained without result, when spread by report through the community, shows how completely the sanctions of the ancient national faith had lost their

to the end of ver. 7, and make it read "have spoken." It seems a judicious emendation, involving only a very slight change of the letters.

[1] Lit., "their own faces."

[2] Ezek. vi. 11-14.

[3] Jerome, *in loc.*

[4] It is Diblah in the Heb. text. But no place called Diblah is known, and Diblathaim in Moab does not suit the connection. Riblah is in 4 MSS., and was adopted by Jerome among ancients as well as by Gesenius, Mühlau, Hitzig, Ewald and Smend among moderns.

hold on the people at large. The prophet of God was utterly discredited. Faith in Jehovah was practically extinct. To rekindle it would be possible only by the bitter experience of a long captivity. But, if without influence at the moment, the time would come when the return of better feeling would make such warnings and reproaches of supreme value, in recalling the deep sinfulness of the past. Although, therefore, he spoke, for the time, as if to the idle air, the prophet constantly returns to the subject, that his own conscience, at least, might be clear, when the catastrophe arrived. He knew, perhaps, that his words were carried back to Palestine, and that he thus spoke to those immediately in danger, as well as to his brethren in Babylonia. One of these additional warnings ran thus. The word of Jehovah, he told his hearers, had come to him, saying:[1]

Thou son of man, thus saith the Lord Jehovah to the fatherland of Israel: The end comes; it comes upon the four corners of the land! It is now upon thee! I will send out My anger against thee, and will judge thee according to thy ways, and lay upon thee the punishment of all thy abominations. My eye shall have no compassion on thee, neither shall I pity thee, but I will lay the punishment of thy ways upon thee, and that of thy abominations shall come into thy midst—that ye may know that I am Jehovah!

Thus says the Lord Jehovah:[2] A calamity, a great calamity, see, it comes! An end, the predicted end, comes! It has slumbered long, but now it awakes against thee! See, it comes! Thy fate[3] steals upon thee, O thou dweller in the land of Judah! The time is at hand! The day of tumult on the mountains, not of rejoicings, is near! Now will I presently pour out My fury

[1] Ezek. vii. 1–4. [2] Ezek. vii. 5–9.

[3] So *Theodoret, De Wette, Winer, Ewald, Keil, Gesenius, Hitzig, Hengstenberg.* The word is Tsephirah, which means a circle or cycle. It is thus = thy turn or time has come.

upon thee, and let loose my anger on thee, to judge thee according to thy ways, and lay on thee the punishment of all thy abominations! And My eye shall have no compassion on thee, neither will I have pity. I will render to thee according to thy ways, and the punishment of thy abominations shall come into the midst of thee—that ye may know that I, Jehovah, smite!

Behold the day! See, it comes![1] Fate quickens into life like the bud of spring; the rod of vengeance buds; the haughtiness of Chaldea blossoms; their fierceness has shot up into a rod to punish the wickedness of the people of Judah! Nothing shall remain of them, nor of their multitude, nor of their substance, neither shall there be any funeral wailing for them! The time is come! The day draws near! The buyer need not rejoice, nor the seller grieve, for fury descends on the whole people![2] For he who has been forced by his exile to sell all he had, will not return to buy back what he sold, though he still live; for the vision of calamity includes the whole population of Judah;[3] no one of the exiles will return, and no one in Jerusalem, with all his unrighteous gain from the forced sales of the property of his banished brethren, will be able to keep to himself[4] even his life.

They blow the trumpet[5] in Jerusalem, and make all ready for war; but their courage fails: no one marches out to the battle; for my wrath is on all the multitude in the city. The sword is outside, pestilence and famine within! He that is in the field will die by the sword; he that is in the city, him will famine and pestilence devour. And any fugitives that escape will be on the mountains like the moaning doves of the cliffs, sighing every one for his sin! All hands will hang down powerless, all knees be like water that flows trembling away. They will gird themselves with the sackcloth of mourning; trembling will seize their whole

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[1] Ezek. vii. 10-13.

[2] Lit., "her crowd or multitude," i.e., the multitude in the land.

[3] *Smend.* The exiles had been forced to sell their property in Jerusalem for next to nothing. But they will never return to claim the Jewish right of redemption of family land.

[4] Lit., "strengthen."

[5] Ezek. vii. 14-21.

frame;[1] despair will be on all faces, and baldness on all heads.[2] They will throw their silver into the streets, and their gold will become an abhorrence, for neither silver nor gold will be able to save them in the day of the wrath of Jehovah, for it will neither satisfy their souls, nor fill their hungry bodies; they will hate their wealth for deceiving the trust put in it: through it they fell into sin.[3] The costly ornaments used for pomp, and the images of their abominable and hateful idols, made from their wealth, I will turn to be their abhorrence, and I will give the city to the barbarians for booty, and to the wicked of the earth for spoil, and they shall desecrate it.

I will also turn away my face from them,[4] and the heathen will pollute even the temple—My unapproachable seat;[5] robbers will press into it, and defile it. Forge the chains, to lead off My people captive! For the land is full of deeds of blood, and the city is full of cruel violence. For this I will bring the worst of the heathen, that they may take their houses in possession; and I will cause their insolent pride to cease, and their holy places shall be defiled! Destruction[6] comes! They seek safety, but in vain! Calamity will follow calamity, and evil tidings press after evil tidings. Then, at last, will they seek heavenly guidance[7] from the prophet, for counsel will no longer be obtainable from the priest, or sound advice from the experienced old.[8] The king will show himself in sackcloth, and the chief men be clothed with speechless terror, and the hands of the common people sink down powerless. For I will deal with them according to their ways,

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[1] Lit., "covers them."

[2] To shave the head was a sign of the deepest mourning, and had become a long-established custom, in spite of the prohibitions in Lev. xix. 28; Deut. xiv. 1, etc. See Micah i. 16.

[3] Paraphrased slightly.

[4] Ezek. vii. 22–27.

[5] Primarily, "concealed;" then, "not to be approached."

[6] From the verb "to roll together," like a weaver's web.

[7] Lit., "a vision," or "revelation."

[8] The priests will have no "Torah" for such circumstances; and even the old, "the bearers of wisdom," will be at their wits' end. The "Torah" will perish from the one, and counsel from the other.

and judge them according to their deserts,[1] that they may know that I am Jehovah!

The eighth chapter of Ezekiel throws interesting light on the mental phenomena of Hebrew prophecy. In the sixth year of his exile from Jerusalem—that is, in B.C. 592—somewhere about September—the fifth day of the sixth month, Elul—the prophet was sitting in his house speaking with the exiled elders of Judah, who sat before him. The relations between him and the community had improved so far that, if he could not venture to speak in public, he was, now, at least sought out in private by their chief men. The crushing of open conspiracy among the captives by the vigorous action of the Babylonian government, had resulted in their being slighted by their brethren still left in Judah, who affected to sneer at what they chose to think their cowardice in quietly submitting to the Chaldean, after all their boasting. Proud in the possession of their city and temple, the men of Jerusalem despised the exiles,[2] who, in their turn, had envied the lot of their brethren at home as apparently happier than their own. But the predictions of the fall of the capital seemed less intolerable since its bearing to them was changed. The prospects of return were growing fainter. Personal interest in the welfare of a place which might never be seen again was insensibly weakened. Such a mood was favourable to the prophet, with whom the Captivity was the divinely-appointed means for the religious revival of his people, and he therefore eagerly hailed any advances on their side.

Things were passing from bad to worse in Jerusalem. Idolatry was growing more gross and varied. The sins of the inhabitants were rapidly wearing out the Divine long-

[1] Lit., "judgments." [2] Ezek. xi. 15.

suffering. If anything could shock the exiles, and lead them to better thoughts, it would be to have the moral decay of the mother city brought vividly before them. Their national pride would surely revolt at the thought of Israel casting off the mighty Jehovah, and sinking to the level of the heathen whom they formerly despised.

It is almost impossible to realize what may, perhaps, without offence be called the mental and spiritual exaltation which made visions like those seen by Ezekiel possible. They remind us of Balaam's "hearing the words of God, and seeing the vision of the Almighty," "falling down, but having his eyes open";[1] or of St. Paul's ecstasy, in which—"whether in the body or out of the body," he could not tell—he saw "visions and revelations,"[2] in which he appeared to be caught up to the third heaven, to Paradise, and heard unspeakable words; or of the wondrous vision of St. Peter, when, being "very hungry," he "fell into a trance," or "ecstasy,[3]—the state of being *out of* one's usual mind, or the *stretching out* of the ordinary faculties—a *standing out* of one's self—and saw the heavens opened. But whatever physical or mental conditions were involved, the whole nature of the prophet must have been kindled to a spiritual fervour and concentration, such as we read of only in the history of a few great saints, while they were under intense religious excitement.[4]

[1] Num. xxiv. 4. [2] 2 Cor. xii. 1, 2.

[3] This is the Greek word.

[4] For example, the trance of Mr. Grimshaw, Perpetual Curate of Haworth, 1742–1763. "On Sunday, September 2, 1744, his maid-servant was called up at five o'clock in the morning, but found that her master had risen before her, and was retired into a private room for prayer. After remaining there some time, he went to a house in Haworth, where he was engaged a while in religious exercises with some of his people He then returned home, and

Suddenly, then, while conversing with the elders, "the hand of the Lord Jehovah fell," or descended, "on him,"[1] and forthwith the vision of the Almighty appeared, seated above the cherubim,[2] as he had seen it before. There was the same likeness of a man[3] clothed with fiery brightness from his waist downward, and shining from thence upward, with the yellow radiance of gold and silver.[4] A

retired for prayer again, and from thence went to church. She believes he had not eaten anything that morning. While reading the second lesson, he fell down, but was soon helped and led out of church. He continued to talk to the people as he went, and desired them not to disperse, as he hoped he should return to them soon, and he had something extraordinary to say to them. They led him to the clerk's house, where he lay seemingly insensible. She, with others, were employed in rubbing his limbs (which were exceedingly cold) with warm cloths. After some time, he came to himself, and seemed to be in great rapture. The first words he spoke were—'I have had a glorious vision from the Third Heaven.' But she does not remember that he made any mention of what he had seen. In the afternoon he performed service at the church, which began at two o'clock, and spoke so long to the people that it was seven o'clock in the evening before he returned home." Newton's *Life of Grimshaw*, p. 36. Similar cases are recorded of Col. Gardner, and of Mr. Tennant of Georgia, among others, in recent times. Handel used to say that he did not know whether he was in the body or out of the body during the composition of the Hallelujah Chorus in the Messiah, and Michael Angelo held that John of Fiesola could never have given the super-earthly look to the Virgin in his picture of the Annunciation, had he not been raised above the sphere of the seen and earthly, at the moment of its conception. The heavens are nearer us than we think, and may open to pious souls in moments of transcendent spiritual exaltation, more frequently than we imagine.

[1] Ezek. viii. 1–4. [2] Ezek. ix. 3.

[3] For fire (ver. 2) read "man." *Sept.* The word "fire" is *ā̆sh*; the word for "man" *ā̄ish*. Same long sound of "a" in both as in "ate."

[4] See p. 432. The Abbé Vigoroux thinks the Hebrew word

hand now seemed to be put forth and take hold of a lock of the prophet's hair, by which the spirit appeared to lift him up, and bear him between earth and heaven; carrying him to Jerusalem, "in the visions of God," that is, as happens in a dream. There he was set down at the southern side of the gate of the priest's court of the temple,—within the inner sacred court, close to the spot where, on the other side of the gate, in the outer court, facing the north, Manasseh had raised a "hewn image of an Asherah,"[1] known since among the priests as "the image of jealousy;" its position beside the great altar, directly in front of the Holy Place, seeming a wilful defiance of Jehovah, "the jealous God."[2] The same awful glory of the God of Israel, with the attendant cherubim and wheels, which the prophet had seen in the valley at Chebar, seemed to have passed before him to Jerusalem, and shone around him once more in the temple. Directed to look to the north,[3] he did so, and saw the "image of jealousy" standing close to the gate, on its outer or north side, the chief object before all the people, for it had been erected again since the death of Josiah. "Do you see," said the Vision, "what My people do—the gross abominations committed here by the House of Israel, in worshipping this Asherah in My very House as if to drive Me far off from My sanctuary? But turn once more, and you will see still greater abominations."

(*Hasmal*) refers to the coloured enamel on the bricks of Babylon and Nineveh, which would flash resplendently in the light. *La Bible et les Découvertes Modernes*, vol. iv. p. 361.

[1] 2 Kings xxi. 7. The words "graven image" in our version (*pesel*) means an image cut in wood, or of metal, or of stone. In this case it was of wood.

[2] Exod. xx. 5; xxxiv. 14. Deut. iv. 24, 25; vi. 15. Isa. xlii. 8.

[3] Ezek. viii. 5-12.

The prophet was then brought to the north side of the archway of the gate at which he had been standing. A large chamber lay next this passage on the east side, the archway forming its western wall, which, as he came near, showed an opening in it, at one spot. "Dig through this," said the Voice, and Ezekiel did so. It proved to be an ancient doorway that had been closed up, perhaps, in the time of Josiah's Reformation, and led into a chamber large enough to let at least seventy men move in it freely. Here the sight was still more distressing than that of the Asherah. The chamber was dark,[1] but artificial light showed that its walls were covered, like those of the similarly dark chambers of Egyptian temples, with paintings of beast-gods of every form, from creeping things upwards. "These pictures, round about," said the Voice, "are all the idols of the House of Israel."[2] The strong Egyptian faction in Jerusalem, in their degrading imitation of foreign manners, had introduced the animal worship of the Nile Valley, and had even turned

[1] Ezek. viii. 12.

[2] One would have thought there could have been no question of the meaning of the words of this phrase as given in the A. V. (Ezek. viii. 12)—"all the idols of the House of Israel." Even Smend understands them as in the text. But Dr. Robertson Smith actually finds in them "a form which indicates the existence of family totems in Israel." *Bible in Jewish Church*, p. 366. A totem is the god of rude tribes in America, Australia, the islands of the South Pacific, and in Central Asia. It may be an animal, vegetable, or dead object; but whatever it is, the tribe is called after it, as one tribe among the North American Indians is called "the Wolf," another "the Bear," and so on. Will any human being tell what possible support such an astounding assertion has from the simple words of Ezekiel? Of the theories of the new criticism it may surely too often be said, "We are such stuff as dreams are made of." The word for idols in the text means "shapeless blocks of wood," "logs."

a large room in the temple into a chapel for its services.[1] But still worse, he saw in vision, in this chamber, seventy of the elders of Judah, the leaders of the people, the very men who should have discountenanced idolatry, standing before the hideous brute gods on the walls, each man with a censer in his hand, offering incense to them. Laymen as they were, they had taken possession of a chamber in the court of the priests, and had appropriated the priestly censers for this vile use. Nor was this the only spot in the temple thus desecrated; each of these worshippers had a chamber of imagery for himself, among the now otherwise unused halls and cells of the sanctuary.[2] To add to his pain, Ezekiel saw among these apostates a son of Shaphan—to whom Hilkiah had brought the Book of the Law, in the eighteenth year of Josiah—and a brother of Ahikam, the friend and protector of Jeremiah, and father of the godly but unfortunate Gedaliah.[3] So deeply had the canker of idolatry penetrated society. Here, in the dark of their idol chapel, the apostates fancied themselves unseen by Jehovah. "He had forsaken the land," they said, "and did not see them."

But not only were the foul Asherah of the Phenicians, and the beast-gods of Egypt, worshipped in the temple—even the sun worship of the East had also found a footing in its courts. Guided by the Vision,[4] the prophet proceeded to the outer north gate of the peoples' court, and there saw women, sitting in the black weeds of mourning, making loud laments for the death of the Syrian sun-god Tammuz or Adonis, whose festival they

[1] Egyptian worship was held in many cases in dark chambers, the walls of which were covered with hieroglyphics and paintings of animal gods of all forms. See *Diod. Sic.*, vol. i. p. 59, ed. Wess. *Amm. Marcell.*, B. xxii. See vol. ii. p. 22. [2] Ezek. viii. 12.
[3] Jer. xxxix. 14; xxvi. 24. [4] Ezek. viii. 13-16.

were thus keeping;[1] the wailing for his death being only a prelude to the obscene rejoicings which greeted his return as the Sun of Spring. But great as was this abomination, a still greater remained. From the outer court, Ezekiel was brought into the inmost, beside the great brazen altar. There, at the very door of the temple building, between the projecting porch of the Holy Place and the altar which stood immediately in front of it, the crowning desecration presented itself. In this, the very holiest spot of the sanctuary,[2] about twenty-five men, presumably representatives of the high priest and of the heads of the twenty-four courses,[3]—for already in Uzziah's time laymen could not enter this sacred space[4]—stood with their backs to the temple—the open sign of apostasy[5]—and worshipped the rising sun, their faces turned to the east.

"Son of man," said the Voice,[6] "hast thou seen this? Is it too small a thing to the House of Judah to commit the abominations they do here? Must they also fill the land with violence, as they have done, and constantly provoke Me to anger; and see, now, like the Eastern heathen, they hold the twig to their nose as they worship the sun.[7] I will, therefore, deal with them in fury; My eye shall not pity, nor will I spare them, and even if they cry in My ears with a loud voice, imploring mercy, I will not hear them!"

[1] See vol. iii. p. 360.
[2] Joel ii. 17.
[3] 2 Chron. xxxvi. 14.
[4] 2 Chron. xxvi. 18.
[5] 2 Chron. xxix. 6. Isa. i. 4. Jer. vii. 24.
[6] Ezek. viii. 17, 18.
[7] The Persians, while they prayed to the sun held twigs of date, granate, and tamarisk, in their left hand, and the priests wore a veil, that their breath might not pollute the Holy One. Spiegel, *Erân. Alter.*, vol. iii. p. 571. The Ssabeans did the same. Chwolson, *Die Ssabier*, vol. ii. pp. 384, 393, 199 ff. Lenormant's *La Divination*, p. 24.

Having disclosed the profound corruption of the people of Judah and Jerusalem, the Vision now, by a vivid image, foreshadowed the terrible penalty to be exacted. The Divine Voice was heard commanding aloud,[1] "Draw near, ye that are to punish[2] the city; every man with the weapon of death in his hand!" Forthwith, six men appeared to come through the gate of the upper, or priests' court, which faced the north, every one with a weapon of death in his hand, a seventh[3] following, clothed in white linen, like a priest[4] or an angel,[5] with a scribe's inkhorn at his side; the whole passing into the priests' court, and standing beside the brazen altar. The glory of the God of Israel seemed then to rise from off the cherubim on which it had rested, and hang over the threshold of the temple, which it once more, for a moment, revisited. From its midst the Divine Voice now cried to the man clothed in white linen, with the inkhorn at his side: "Go through the midst of the city—the midst of Jerusalem—and sign a cross[6] on the foreheads of the people who are moaning and sobbing for sorrow, on account of all the abominations done in its midst!" Turning next to the six others, the Voice commanded them to follow their companion through the city, and slay! "Let not your eye spare," it said, "nor have any pity; old and young, maidens and little children and women—slay them all, to the last! but come near no one on whom is the

[1] Ezek. ix. 1-7. [2] Lit. "ye punishments of."
[3] Six to destroy; one, to save! [4] Lev. vi. 3; xvi. 4.
[5] Dan. x. 5; xii. 6, 7. The Jewish belief in seven archangels seems to have sprung from this verse.
[6] *Gesenius. Ewald.* The word is Tav, and means a sign or mark, especially in the form of a cross. In Arabic "Tiv," means a cross burned in on the necks or thighs of horses and camels. Hence the letter Tau has the form of a cross in the Phenician alphabet, and on the coins of the Maccabees.

cross, and begin from My sanctuary!" The elders before the temple, so lately busy with idol worship, were the first to fall;[1] the Voice calling aloud to the six slayers to "Defile the temple and fill its courts with the slain." This done, swift as lightning—another command followed: "Go ye forth, now, into the city." And they went forth to slay the city population.

Moved by such fierce destruction, which carried with it the utter ruin of Israel, the prophet seemed, in the vision, to fall on his face,[2] and cry out, "Ah, Lord Jehovah! Wilt Thou destroy all the remnant of Israel, in this outpouring of Thy fury on Jerusalem!" But the hour of mercy was past. "The iniquity of the House of Israel and Judah," replied the Voice, "is very very great; the land is full of blood and the city with the perversion of right, for they say, 'Jehovah has forsaken the land,' and 'Jehovah does not see.' Therefore My eye shall not spare, nor will I have pity; I will let the punishment of their way rest on their heads!" But now the man clothed in white reappeared, to announce that the Divine command, to slay the multitude of the citizens, sparing only the godly, had been carried out.

A new phase of the Vision then opened. Jehovah once more[3] sat on His sapphire throne, above the firmament borne by the four cherubim, and commanded the man or angel, in white, to go between the wheels, under the cherubim, and fill his hand with burning coals from the midst of these awful forms, and scatter them over the city![4] As he hastened to obey, the cherubim stood on the right or south side of the temple, and the cloud of the Divine glory filled the inner court. But now, again, the glory rose from over them, and rested above the threshold

[1] Ezek. viii. 16. [2] Ezek. ix. 8-11. [3] Ezek. x. 1-22.
[4] It was to perish like Sodom. "Coals" = brands.

of the sanctuary, filling it with a blinding splendour which shone over all the court; the wings of the cherubim sounding amidst the brightness, "like the voice of El Shaddai when He thunders." Putting forth his hand, one of the cherubim took fire from between the wheels, and gave it to the man clothed in white, who took it and went out. The glory of Jehovah then rose from over the temple threshold, and rested again above the cherubim, who forthwith spread their wings and mounted up from the earth; the mysterious wheels, quickened to hurricane speed[1] by a command from the Vision, accompanying their every motion. God was about finally to forsake His fallen city, now filled with slain, but He paused for a moment at the east gate of the temple, whither the spirit also transported the prophet.

At this spot, the east gate of the outer court, twenty-five men seemed to be assembled, two of whom, at least, the prophet recognised—Jaazaniah, the son of Azur, and Pelatiah, the son of Benaiah, both members of the aristocratic party, and heads of the people, as indeed were all the others.[2] "Son of man," said the Divine Voice, as they appeared, "these are the men who guide the city; planning wickedness and giving evil counsel. Mocking the words of Jeremiah, they say, 'The time is not near to build houses for the returning exiles. So far from that, the prophet has told us that the city is the pot and we the flesh, to be stewed in flames of war!'[3]

[1] Ezek. x. 13. The words "O wheel," are in Hebrew only one —Galgal—which means a whirlwind as well as a wheel, the idea of rolling being common to both.

[2] Ezek. xi. 1–4.

[3] Jerome, *in loc.*, renders this passage: "'Although lately,' say they, 'after the first captivity, houses which had been destroyed were rebuilt, yet it is not the time now to build. For this city is the pot, and we are the flesh to be cooked in it.'" Smend has virtually

Therefore prophesy, prophesy against them, son of man!"

On this the Spirit of Jehovah appeared in the vision, to descend again, on the seer, and to command him to say—

Thus says Jehovah:[2] Ye have indeed spoken in this way, O House of Israel, and I know well, besides, what rises in your mind, however ye may seek to hide it from me! The number of victims you have slain in this city by violence and perverted justice is very great; ye have filled her streets with them! Therefore, thus says the Lord Jehovah; your victims, whom ye have heaped up in the midst of her, are the flesh, and she is the pot! They alone lie safe in your midst! But I will lead forth you, yourselves, their murderers, into captivity. Ye have feared the sword, and the sword will I bring on you, says the Lord Jehovah. I will lead you out of the city as captives, and give you into the hand of aliens, and execute judgment on you. Ye shall fall by the sword. I will judge you at a place on the borders of Israel,[3] that ye may know that I am Jehovah! Jerusalem shall not be *your* pot, nor shall *ye* be the flesh in it. I will judge *you* on the borders of Israel, and ye shall know that I am Jehovah, in whose commands ye did not walk, and whose laws ye did not obey; for ye acted according to the practices[4] of the heathen round about you!

At this moment, while Ezekiel was apparently delivering this terrible doom, an awful incident occurred in the vision. His words had fallen with fatal effect on the

adopted Jerome's explanation, and so has Rosenmüller. Smend says, "It is not the time to build houses (rough times are before us);—the town is the pot and we the flesh (and we will be cooked by the fire of war)." Conscious of their false position and the danger ahead, they try to put on a light air and laugh the matter off, living recklessly while they can.

[1] *Havernick. Hitzig. Keil.* [2] Ezek. xi. 5-12.

[3] At Riblah. How literally fulfilled! 2 Kings xxv. 6. Jer. lii. 9, 10. [4] Lit., "laws."

ears of Pelatiah, one of the men now addressed. The terrors before him, as one of the guiltiest amongst those accused, had brought on a sudden fit, in which he forthwith died. At the sight, the prophet was overpowered. It seemed as if all Israel were to perish, and, falling on his face, he once more cried with a loud voice, "Ah, Lord Jehovah! Wilt Thou make an utter end of the remnant of Israel?" But the Divine Voice replied with words of comfort. The people of Jerusalem had turned against their brethren of the Captivity, and had boasted that the Holy City was for ever the inheritance of those that were left. The exiles, however, would supply a remnant to Israel, and would one day come back and possess the land of their fathers.

Son of man![1] Thy brethren, even thy brethren, the men of thy captivity,[2] and the whole House of Israel together, are they to whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem said—"Get you gone, far from Jehovah! The land is given to us for an inheritance!" Therefore say, Thus says the Lord Jehovah; Because I have cast them far off among the heathen, and scattered them through the lands, and hvae been but little of a sanctuary, or defence to them, in the countries whither they have come; therefore say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, I will gather you from among the heathen, and bring you back from the lands where ye have been scattered, and I will give *you* the land of Israel! And the exiles, when they thus return and come hither, will put away from the soil of Israel all its detestable idols, and all its heathen abominations. And I will give them one heart, and will put a new spirit within them; and I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh; that they may walk in My statutes and keep My laws and do them, and they shall be My people,

[1] Ezek. xi. 13-21.

[2] As the word stands in the Hebrew text. Lit., "those who have the right of redemption for thee." But Ewald and Smend amend the word slightly, and make it—of thy "exile," or "captivity." This I have adopted, as it gives a much better sense.

and I will be their God. But as to those here, in Judah and Jerusalem, whose heart walks after their detestable idols and their heathen abominations, I will bring down the punishment of their way on their own heads, saith the Lord Jehovah!

The vision now ended. The cherubim spread their wings,[1] and the wheels moved at their side, the glory of the God of Israel resting over them, as the prophet followed the awful sight till it passed over the Mount of Olives, towards the east, and was hidden from him. But at that moment he awoke, and found himself in his own chamber—the ecstasy gone—and his faculties loosened so that he could repeat to the elders, who were still around him, the amazing sights and words he had seen and heard. It had all been, in effect, a dream, though a dream from God, and we know that in dreams a few moments suffice to bring before the mind the details and communications of apparently lengthened events.

It might have been hoped that the blending of terror and gentle pity, which had marked this striking message, would have moved the exiles to better thoughts towards the God of their fathers. But, in the prophet's words, "though they had eyes, they saw not; and though they had ears, they would not hear." It was impossible, however, for an earnest soul like that of Ezekiel to be silent, even if his efforts to benefit his brethren were vain. The true state of things in Jerusalem, and the best interests of his fellow-captives, demanded his speaking often and earnestly. The fact that, as yet, all was outwardly calm, and that no thought of a campaign against Jerusalem had been mooted in Babylon, made it hard to induce belief in the ruin predicted as so near.

Very different accounts of the state of feeling in the mother city were evidently abroad. On the one hand, as

[1] Ezek. xi. 22-25.

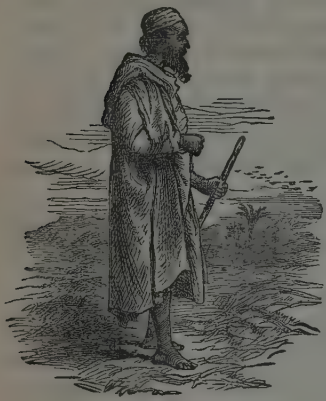
we see from Jeremiah, the agitation against the Chaldean vassalage was increasing, and threatened to lead to the most perilous results; the majority of influential public men in Jerusalem supporting it, and urging king Zedekiah to form a league with Egypt, which would, itself, be a declaration of war against Babylon. They were, unhappily, able, indeed, ere long, to force him into it.[1] A league with Pharaoh secured, the city, they fancied, would enjoy a long future of victory and peace.

There were others, however, who had no such illusory anticipations, though they failed, in the heightening confusion, to realize the true solution and hope. Hence, in the deepening gloom they were overwhelmed with despondency; even the truths of their ancient faith, and the words of the prophets, giving birth, in their despairing hearts, only to mocking jests which spread far and wide.[2]

The exiles around Ezekiel echoed these opposite feelings. Many showed plainly the incredulity with which they received his words,[3] but vain hope and distracting excitement were the prevalent mood. False prophets among them sought still, at least in secret, to promote the views of the anti-Chaldean party in Jerusalem, and even the elders who came to Ezekiel, let it be seen only too plainly, that, while willing to hear his counsels and consolations, they would fain win from him some utterance favourable to their cherished hope of a speedy return to Palestine. They still, moreover, as the prophet discovered,[4] hankered after idolatry, and thus precluded his repeating even the comfort he had hitherto given them.[5]

[1] Ezek. xvii. 7; xix. 1.
[2] Ezek. xii. 22; xviii. 2.
[3] Ezek. xii. 27.
[4] Ezek. xiv. 3; xx. 30.
[5] Ezek. xi. 17-20.

Under such circumstances, Ezekiel threw himself into the duties of his office with intense zeal, for a few years only remained in which even to mitigate the calamities he so clearly foresaw. His next attempt, therefore, was to combat, once more, the idle hope of the deliverance of Jerusalem from vassalage to the Chaldeans. For this end words were not enough. Above all other prophets he taught by vivid "signs," or acted presentations of the truths he sought to enforce; Jehovah, in this, as in other cases, adapting the mode of His revelations to the mental characteristics of His servants.



A Poor Bedouin on a Journey.

That Jerusalem would very soon be besieged so fiercely that its princes would seek escape by a hasty flight was, hence, set before the minds of the exiles afresh, in dramatic action, peculiar to the prophetic order. In obedience to a Divine impulse, Ezekiel packed up[1] a bundle of personal necessaries, such as one would carry with him on a hasty journey, and prepared, by day, to set off;[2] laying the bundle before his door, that it might be seen by all. He himself, however, was to set out by night, like a captive, digging a hole through the soft sundried bricks of his house, which he could easily

[1] Ezek. xii. 1–8.

[2] The actual setting out was to be by night.

do,[1] and going out, before all the people, by the gap. His bundle, which had previously been carried back, inside the house, was then, in the darkness, taken out through the opening; the prophet lifting it on his shoulder, and acting as if he were setting off with it; his face covered with his mantle, so that he could not see the ground over which he was passing. The whole was to be a "sign" of what awaited king Zedekiah, and vividly foreshadowed his last disastrous attempt to escape.[2]

In anticipation of the notice such an act on the part of a recognised prophet would attract, words were put into the mouth of Ezekiel, to reply to any question.[3] Ezekiel was to tell the "House of Disobedience," for thus Jehovah would call His people till they repented—

Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: This burden-bearing refers to the Prince Zedekiah, in Jerusalem, and to all the House of Israel in that city. Say, to your brethren, the exiles, O Ezekiel—I am your "Sign." As I have done, this last night, so will it be done to the people of Jerusalem. They will go into exile and into captivity. And the prince that is among them[4] will bear a burden on his shoulder, in the darkness, and shall go forth; they will, as it were, dig through the wall to get out—for the Chaldeans will watch at the gates—and the prince will cover his face, to conceal it, so that he will not see the ground as he goes. But I will spread My net over him, and he will be taken in my snare, caught like a wild creature by the hunter, and I will bring him to Babylon, the land of the Chaldeans; yet he will not see it,[5] and he will die there! And I will scatter to all the winds his guard that is round him, and all his forces, and unsheathe the

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[1] *Land and Book*, p. 544.

[2] Jer. xxxix. 4; lii. 7. 2 Kings xxv. 4.

[3] Ezek. xii. 9-16.

[4] Jehoiachin was the legitimate king. Ezekiel, therefore, speaks of Zedekiah not as the Melek, but as the Nasr—"the exalted one."

[5] His eyes were put out at Riblah.

sword behind them. And they shall know that I am Jehovah, when I scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them among the lands! But I will leave a few of their number, to escape from the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, that they may make known all their abominable deeds among the nations whither they come. And they shall know that I am Jehovah.

Another acted sermon followed soon after.[1] The prophet was directed to show the terror and despair that would come on Judah when it was invaded, by eating his bread and drinking his water before his neighbours, trembling, and shaking, and overborne with sorrow, and to tell them that the meaning of his doing so was, that Jehovah had said, respecting the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the land of Israel, that they would eat their bread in sorrow, and drink their water in despairing terror, because the land would be laid desolate, emptied of its fulness of life and activity, through the wickedness of its people as a whole. The inhabited towns would be laid waste and the land made a desert, and they would know that He was Jehovah!

Things were hurrying on to the inevitable, but the story of the great catastrophe must be reserved for another volume.

[1] Ezek. xii. 17-20.

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# PREFACE.

With this volume the Old Testament series of these "Hours" is complete. Thank God for the health that has enabled me to keep at this part of my task for five years past! If I be spared, the New Testament series will follow in due course.

Meanwhile, I would gratefully thank my brother clergy of every rank; the ministers of all sections of the Church, and the reading public, for the kindly reception given to my books throughout the English-speaking world. The favourable recognition they have met in so many lands, as shown by the language of the public press, and by private letters from correspondents in all positions, has been most grateful to me.

No attempt, so far as I am aware, has hitherto been made to incorporate the utterances of the prophets with

the special incidents of contemporary history to which so many of them relate. Eichhorn, alone, has to some extent followed this course, but in his case, each discourse has been treated in a distinct and isolated chapter. The light thrown on writings often so difficult as they stand in our Bibles, by introducing them in their historical connection, must be evident. They become again, what they originally were—the pulpit literature of the day in which they were spoken, and, as such, at once reflect light on the sacred narrative and are illustrated by it.

In the translations I have offered, great care has been taken to keep closely to the Hebrew text, but such expansion has been made throughout as seemed necessary to explain allusions, connect the argument, or make clear the meaning.

And now may the blessing of the All-loving One go forth with my book.

BARNSTAPLE,
*April 12th*, 1884.

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# HOURS WITH THE BIBLE.

## CHAPTER I.

### A VOICE FROM CHEBAR, AGAINST JUDAH.

NOTHING was more fatal to the religious life of the exiles in Chaldea, or their brethren still left in Judah, than the confident air of members of the order of prophets, who held out hopes directly opposed to the warnings of men like Ezekiel and Jeremiah. The result had been a general disbelief in prophecy. It had become a common saying that "The days of trouble are long in coming; all prophecy is deceit."[1] Men who thus misled the community by audacious misrepresentations made in the sacred name of God, needed to be openly assailed, and Ezekiel, therefore, determined thoroughly to expose them. Referring to the proverb so current, he informed his fellow-captives that Jehovah commanded him to address them thus, in His name:—

23 I will[2] make this proverb cease, so that it will no longer be used in Israel. Say to them: The days of visitation and of the fulfilment of every prediction are at hand. 24 For there shall no more be lying vision, or false flattering divination, in the House

[1] Ezek. xii. 22. [2] Ezek. xii. 23-28.

of Israel. 25 But I, Jehovah, will speak, and what I speak will come forthwith to pass; it will be no longer delayed. In your own days, O House of Disobedience, I will both speak and fulfil My word, says the Lord Jehovah!

Another saying, current everywhere, was not less unworthy. Men sneeringly insinuated that "the visions which Ezekiel[1] saw were for the long future; his prophecies, for distant times." In contradiction to this, they were now told from Jehovah Himself, that none of His words, spoken through His true prophets, would fail of present fulfilment. The pretended prophets who spoke "according to their own hearts," were next directly attacked.

3 Woe[2]—cried Ezekiel—to the impious[3] prophets, who follow not Jehovah, but their own fancy, and give out visions that they have not seen! 4 Thy prophets, O Israel, these impious prophets, have not built up the tottering state, but have brought it nearer its fall, as foxes, burrowing in rotten walls, undermine them daily[4] 5 Ye have not gone out before the gaps of the tottering jedar,[5] to defend it; nor have ye tried to build it up and repair it, round Israel, or taken your stand in the van of the battle in the day of Jehovah!

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[1] Lit., "this one."

[2] Ezek. xiii. 1-5.

[3] Folly and impiety were related ideas among the Hebrews; the word here primarily means "foolish."

[4] Wilton (*Negeb*, p. 138) thinks the jackal is intended; but the word Shual is from Shaal="to go down into the depth," in allusion to the burrowing of the fox in the earth.

[5] Heb. *gadair*. For meaning of *jedar*, see vol. iv. p. 218. The loose wall of dry stones round the vineyard had been undermined by winter storms, for the prophet has changed his figure, but these men have not, like faithful keepers of the vineyard, stood outside the gaps by night to keep wild beasts from breaking in, nor have they filled them up and strengthened the weak and shaking jedar, to make the vineyard safe.

Instead of this, they had promised a happy future, in lying oracles—

6 They have seen a mock vision[1] and spoken false predictions, when they said, "Jehovah saith," without His having sent them, and that they might hope to fulfil their words. 7 Is it not true that you have pretended to see a mock vision, and spoken false divinations, saying, "Jehovah speaks," when I, Jehovah, have *not* spoken?

8 Therefore, thus says the Lord Jehovah; Because ye have spoken falsehood, and pretended to see lies; behold I am against you, says the Lord Jehovah. 9 And My hand will come on the prophets who see falsehood and divine lies. They shall not be the counsellors of My people, nor shall they be inscribed in the Book of the House of Israel, nor come into the land of Israel at the Return—that ye may know that I am the Lord Jehovah— 10 because they have led astray My people, saying "All is well," though all is not well. For if my people build a wall,[2] behold, these prophets smooth it off with plaster; if they have delusions, these men confirm them in them. 11 Say to these plasterers up of lies, that these lies will fall. For a deluge of rain is coming; and ye hailstones, fall ye; thou hurricane, break loose! 12 And, lo, when your wall has fallen, will they not say to you, "Where is that which you plastered over?" 13 Therefore, thus says the Lord Jehovah, I will let loose a hurricane wind in My fury, and a rain, sweeping all before it, will come in My anger, and hailstones in My destroying wrath! 14 And I will cast down the wall that you have plastered up, and throw it to the earth, laying bare its very foundation, and it will fall, and you will perish under it, and you will know that I am Jehovah![3] 15 I will let loose my fury on the wall and on them that plastered it over,[4] and it will be said of

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[1] Ezek. xiii. 6–16.

[2] That is, dream of safety and protection as the result of plots, alliances, and the like. The expression is like our "castles in the air."

[3] The wall is Jerusalem itself; the plaster is the illusory promising of the false prophets which faced the badly built wall, and seemed to give strength; the bad building is the moral corruption of the city.

[4] With "white plaster" = lime.

you, 16 "The wall is no more, neither they who plastered it over —the prophets of Israel, who prophesy visions of peace to her though there is no peace," saith the Lord Jehovah!

But false prophets were not the only enemies with whom their faithful brethren had to contend. While these deceived the people as a whole, false prophetesses misled individuals, and snared souls by unholy arts, promising life and prosperity where God had denounced death. They, therefore, are next assailed.

17 Likewise,[1] thou son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people who prophesy after their own heart, for gain, and with heathen spells. Prophesy thou against them, 18 and say, Thus says the Lord Jehovah; Woe to the women that sew together magic ornaments for every joint of the hand,[2] and make magic coverings for the heads of persons of every age, to snare their souls.[3] Will you thus hunt down the souls of My people to preserve your own souls alive, 19 dishonouring Me before My people for a few handfuls of barley and for bits of bread, for your

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[1] **Ezek. xiii. 17-19.**

[2] In verse 20 they are said to be on the *arms*.

[3] De Wette and Ewald seem to have hit on the most reasonable explanation of this passage—Smend agreeing with them. De Wette fancies magic bands and fillets are meant. Ewald thinks the magic ornaments were mirrors (very probably small in size), which these female dabblers in the black arts carried, as he supposes, on their arms or in their hands, as other women carried their ordinary mirrors. Ewald, *Die Propheten*, vol. ii. p. 261. Rosenmüller has anticipated this solution in his wonderful Scholia. Some, says he, think the words refer to the magic rites of these women—by which, through placing such ornaments or things (whatever they were) on the person of those consulting them, they wished to make them more fitted to receive their divinations. Theodoret supposes pillows are mentioned as a figure for smooth and seductive discourse; soft pillows inducing quiet and ease, and soft words, though false, pleasing and soothing in a similar way, while instilling every kind of perversion into the mind.

maintenance; slaying souls which should not *die*, and keeping others alive which should not *live*[1]—by lying to those of My people who listen to your falsehood?

20 Therefore, thus says the Lord Jehovah; [2] Behold, I am against your magic knots and bands, by which ye snare souls, as if they were quarry to strike down; and I will tear them from your arms, and will set the souls free—the souls that ye hunt as if they were quarry to strike down.[3] 21 And I will tear off your magic mantles and head coverings, and deliver My people out of your hand, that they may no longer be in your hand to be hunted down; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah! 22 Because ye have falsely made sad the heart of the righteous, though *I* have not made him sad, and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not turn from his wicked way, so as to save his life—23 therefore you shall no more have lying visions, nor speak any more false divinations, and ye shall know I am Jehovah!

If, however, it was imperative to denounce those who thus led the people astray, it was no less so to expose the sins of the people themselves, which made them an easy prey. Advice and consolation were sought from the true prophets, but there was still a hankering in the depth of the hearts of most, after their old corruptions, the high places and their idols. Their homage to the prophet was thus only outward and worthless. But such hypocrisy

[1] Smend has, "preserved the souls of others alive"—destroying the godly by the terror of their rites, and keeping alive the godless, their supporters. But this seems far-fetched. De Wette says, "preserving alive the souls who belong to you." Rabbi Dr. Arnheim says, "that you may preserve your own life." Rosenmüller paraphrases the verse thus, "Shall I at all permit that you should destroy My people, by your laying on them your lying oracles, predicting all misfortunes and evils to them, while you cheer your own kind by promising them every happiness? The end will be different from what you think; good fortune will not come to the ungodly, as you say, but every evil will light on you and those who listen to you." *Ezechiel*, in loc., vol. i. p. 355.

[2] Ezek. xiii. 20-23.

[3] De Wette renders it, "to make them fly to you."

was utterly hateful to Jehovah, and entailed on those guilty of it, His severest indignation. To root it from the bosoms of the people, He threatened to visit them with the sternest punishments. Thus alone could His ancient relation to Israel be restored. The enforcing these truths was now the task of Ezekiel, and an occasion soon presented itself. Taking advantage of a visit from some elders of the people, he thus addressed the community through them. The Divine Voice had warned him of their secret leaning to heathenism. "Son of man,"[1] it had said, "these men cherish their loathsome gods[2] in their hearts, and set before their eyes, as the object of their worship, the images which are the stumbling block that causes their iniquity. Should I be inquired of at all by such as they?" He was therefore told to say to them:—

4 Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Every man of the House of Israel that cherishes his loathsome gods in his heart, and sets before his eyes the idols which are the stumbling block of his iniquity, and then comes to the prophet, I, Jehovah, will answer him as he deserves, with the punishment due for his multitude of loathsome gods; 5 that I may visit home the heart sins of the House of Israel,[3] because they are all alienated from Me through their loathsome gods.

6 Therefore,[4] say to the House of Israel: Thus says the Lord Jehovah, Repent and turn back from your loathsome gods, and turn your faces from all idols, abominations as they are! 7 For every one of the House of Israel, and of the foreigners sojourning in Israel, who separates himself from Me and cherishes his loathsome gods in his heart, and sets up before his eyes the stumbling block which causes his iniquity, and yet comes to a prophet, to ask him to inquire of Me on his behalf, I, Jehovah, Myself will answer. 8 And I will set My face against that man,

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[1] Ezek. xiv. 1-5.

[2] "Loathsome," lit., "filth-gods" and so throughout.

[3] Lit., "take them in their heart." [4] Ezek. xiv. 6-8.

and make him a sign and a proverb, and cut him off from the midst of My people; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah.

9 As to the prophet who lets himself be persuaded,[1] and speaks a Word for his own ends as if from Me; I, Jehovah, who know the heart, will not hinder him that he should not be persuaded.[2] And I will stretch out My hand against him, and destroy him from the midst of My people Israel. 10 They will each bear the punishment of his iniquity; the punishment of the prophet shall be the same as that of him who has inquired of Me through him; 11 that the House of Israel may no more go astray from Me, or pollute themselves any more by all the misdeeds of such offenders, but be My people, and I their God, saith the Lord Jehovah!

The affairs of Jerusalem seem to have been almost as well known among the exiles as in Judea. In spite of all warnings, the Egyptian party was gradually forcing the weak Zedekiah into a league with the Pharaoh, which involved the breach of his solemn oath "by God," to be a true vassal of the Chaldean king. Such faithlessness, Ezekiel felt, was certain to bring down the severest punishments on the land. Like all the ancient Hebrews, he firmly believed in temporal rewards for godliness, and penalties for sin. It was, however, a difficulty with many, that he should have predicted the escape of some of the idolatrous people of Jerusalem from the judgments impending on their fellows. He therefore shows them that, while the fear of God preserves alive the worthy, as seen in the cases of Noah, Daniel, and Job, the land that sins must suffer. Nor is the fact that some of the ungodly of Jerusalem would be spared, any contradiction to this, for they are preserved only to vindicate God's righteousness, by letting the heathen see their vileness, and thus recognise the justice of the Divine judgments inflicted on their city. The Word of Jehovah, says he, came again to me, saying:—

[1] **Ezek. xiv. 9–11.** [2] *Eichhorn.*

13 Son of man,[1] when a land sins against Me by gross unfaithfulness,[2] and I stretch out My hand against it, and break the staff of its bread, and send on it Famine, and cut off man and beast from it. 14 Though these three men, Noah, Daniel,[3] and Job were in it, they would save only their own lives by their righteousness, says the Lord Jehovah. 15 If I let Wild Beasts come into a land, and they bereave it of its children, so that it become such a desert that no one can pass through it any more, because of these beasts; 16 though these three men were in it, as I live, says the Lord Jehovah, they would save neither sons nor daughters; they, themselves, only, would be saved, but the land would be desolate. 17 Or, should I bring War on that land, and say, "Sword, go through that land," and should cut off man and beast from it; 18 though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, they would save neither sons nor daughters; they, themselves, only would be saved! 19 Or, if I send Pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, cutting off from it man and beast; 20 were even Noah, Daniel, and Job in it, as I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, they would save neither son nor daughter; they would save their own lives only, by their righteousness.

21 Now, says the Lord Jehovah;[4] How much more will this be the case when I send My four sore judgments on Jerusalem—the Sword, Famine, Wild Beasts, and Pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast! 22 And, behold, if a few should be spared in it, and led away captives, both men and women, it will be that they may be brought among you,[5] that you may see their way and their doings, and be comforted concerning the evil I have brought on Jerusalem, and all I have done against it. 23 For they will satisfy your minds respecting Me, when you see their ways and their doings, and you will know that I have not done without cause, all that I have done in it, says the Lord Jehovah!

Another fragment of Ezekiel's utterances in these years strikes keenly at the self-complacency of his brethren, and

[1] **Ezek. xiv. 12-20.**

[2] Ewald thinks the breach of the oath by Zedekiah is referred to.

[3] Daniel was at the time a captive in Babylonia. The inversion of names may rise from the fact of the case of Job seeming like a climax. See Heb. xi. 32.

[4] **Ezek. xiv. 21-23.** [5] In Babylon, among the exiles.

must have galled their pride. They boasted of being the noble vine planted in Canaan by God. Prophets had often compared them to one,[1] though they had spoken also of its having degenerated and grown rank and useless. But in the present case the worthlessness of the wood of the vine, so much softer and more crooked than many other kinds, is the only point brought forward. They might, indeed, be a vine, but, now that they bore no fruit, of what worth was their wood? The Word of Jehovah, he says, came to him, saying :—

2 Son of man,[2] what better is the wood of the vine than other kinds of wood? Or what is the vine-branch among the trees of the yaar?[3] 3 Can you take wood from it, to make into anything? or do they take even a pin from it, to hang any vessel upon? 4 See, it is given for food to the fire! The flame has burnt off its two ends, and scorched the middle.[4] Is it good for anything? 5 Even, when it was whole, it was good for nothing; how much less will it be good for anything when the fire has burnt and scorched it!

6 Therefore, thus says the Lord Jehovah; I will make the inhabitants of Jerusalem like the wood of the vine, which I have given like that of the other trees of the yaar, as food for the fire. 7 I will set my face against them. They came out of the fire, when I brought them from Egypt, and fire will now finally consume them, and ye shall know that I am Jehovah, when I set My face against them, 8 and make the land desolate, because they have committed unfaithfulness! saith the Lord Jehovah.

Ceaseless in his endeavours to rouse his fellow-countrymen to a sense of their true position, as apostates, to a lamentable extent, from the religion of their fathers, and as morally degenerate and corrupt, Ezekiel tried every

[1] Hos. x. 1. Isa. v. 1. Jer. ii. 21.

[2] Ezek. xv. 1–8. [3] See vol. iv. p. 358.

[4] Is this an allusion to the calamities already endured by the Twelve Tribes?

style of address in turn. An allegory, long and minute, was his next attempt to influence them for good. Jerusalem is personified as a new-born female child, exposed at her birth, but graciously taken under His protection by Jehovah, and ultimately united with Him in a marriage contract, and tenderly cared for. Her conduct, however, is ungrateful and wicked in the extreme, so that, in the end, He has to threaten her with the severest punishment for her unfaithfulness, which is shown to have been greater than that of the worst of her neighbours.

The Word of Jehovah, he says, came to him, directing him to "cause Jerusalem to know her abominations," and this he does as follows.

3 Thus saith the Lord Jehovah to Jerusalem;[1] Thy origin and birth (as regards thy spiritual history) were of the land of the Canaanites; thy father was an Amorite and thy mother a Hittite; (for when taken by David thou wast a heathen Jebusite city—Amorites and Hittites forming a large part of thy population). 4 In the day of thy birth thou wast not cared for;[2] thou wast not washed with water, nor rubbed with salt,[3] nor wrapped in swaddling clothes. 5 No eye pitied thee, to do any of these things for thee, or had compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out, and exposed on the open field, on the day of thy birth; so much wast thou loathed.

This refers, by a change of allusion, to the wretched condition of Israel in Egypt. But Jehovah had pity upon the helpless outcast.

[1] Ezek. xvi. 1–5.

[2] I paraphrase the clause of the original.

[3] Infants were rubbed with salt in the idea that it hardened the skin. To this day this is done to every new-born infant in Palestine, before it is wrapped round with swaddling clothes—that is, plain bands of calico about six inches wide by three yards in length. *Neil*, p. 41. .

6 Then went I, Jehovah, by thee,[1] and saw thee lying[2] in thy blood, and said to thee—"All wretched[3] as thou art, live;" yes, I said to thee, "All wretched as thou art, live." 7 Ten thousandfold increase, like that of the shoots of the field, I gave thee, and thou didst multiply, and wax great, and thou camest to have beauty of cheeks, and thy bosom became womanly and thy hair grew long, though once thou hadst been naked and bare. 8 And as I passed by I saw thee, and loved thee, and made thee My spouse by solemn covenant,[4] and took thee under my protection, throwing as it were My mantle over thee as sign that I did so,[5] saith the Lord Jehovah, and thou becamest Mine. 9 Then I washed thee with water, and cleansed thee from all the shame of the past, and anointed thee with oil. 10 I clothed thee with broidered work of many colours, and shod thee with sandals of seal leather,[6] and wound a girdle of the finest linen round thee, and hung on thee a silken veil,[7] to thy feet. 11 I decked thee with ornaments; I put bracele s on thy wrists, and a gold chain round thy neck. 12 I hung a ring on thy nose, and earrings on thine ears, and set a fair coronet on thy brow. 13 Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver, and thy raiment was of the finest linen, and silk, and many coloured embroidery, and thou atest the

SANDALS.

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[1] Ezek. xvi. 6-14. [2] Sprawling. *Henderson.*

[3] Lit., "bloody."

[4] Under Moses and Joshua, especially at Sinai. [5] Ruth iii. 9.

[6] Lit., "Tahash leather." See vol. ii. pp. 110, 292.

[7] It is not quite certain that the Hebrews knew of silk in Ezekiel's day. But see Gesen., *Thesaurus*, s. v. Meshi. Jerome calls it "a garment so fine as to seem equal to the finest hair." See also *Movers*, vol. ii. pp. 3, 363.

finest bread, and honey, and oil; and thou wast indeed passing fair, and didst come to be a queen,[1] 14 and thy fame went forth among the nations, for thy beauty, which was perfect, through the splendour in which I had arrayed thee, saith the Lord Jehovah!

But, though thus divinely favoured, Israel had been unfaithful to God. Following the example of Hosea, Ezekiel represents this by the figure of conjugal infidelity. All alliances with heathen nations had been thus denounced by the earlier prophet, but the special guilt of Ezekiel's day was the idolatrous worship that had prevailed since the time of Manasseh, involving even human sacrifice. Interrupted, in a measure, during Josiah's reign, it had broken out afresh after his death.

15 But thou didst trust to thy beauty,[2] and thy fame seduced thee to lewdness, and thou gavest thyself up to uncleanness with every passer by, and becamest his![3] 16 Thou didst take thy robes and made many-coloured Asherah tents with them, and committedst impurity under them; a thing that should never have happened.[4]

17 Thou didst also take thy ornaments, of My gold and silver that I had given thee, and making them into images of men,[5] committedst impurity with these. 18 And thou tookedst thy many-coloured robes and arrayed the idols in them, and didst set My oil and incense before them. 19 Thou didst, further, set before them, for a sweet savour, My bread that I had given thee;[6] fine flour, and oil, and honey with which I fed thee, saith the Lord Jehovah!

20 Still worse,[7] thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hadst borne to Me, and didst offer them to thy idols, to be destroyed in their honour. Were thy other sins so small 21 that thou shouldst also slay My sons, and give them up to pass

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[1] Lit., "kingdom." [2] Ezek. xvi. 15-19.

[3] Thou didst coquette with every form of idolatry.

[4] Text apparently corrupt. Ewald translates the clause, "O shame and disgrace!"

[5] The idols were of human shape, for the most part.

[6] Lev. xxi. 6. [7] Ezek. xvi. 20-25.

through the fire, for these idols? 22 And, amidst all thy abominations and lewdness, thou hast forgotten the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, and lay, cast out, in thy defilement.[1] 23 But after thou hadst committed all these iniquities, Woe, woe, to thee! saith the Lord Jehovah, 24 thou hast also built a canopy for an altar, and made a high place, in every street.[2] 25 At every meeting of the roads thou didst build thy high places, and didst dishonour to thy beauty, and disgraced thyself before all, and multiplied thy idolatry.

The introduction of Egyptian, Assyrian, and Babylonian heathenism was notorious.

26 Thou hast also[3] borrowed idolatry from the Egyptians, thy neighbours, foul in their heathenism,[4] and hast increased thy sins, to provoke Me to anger. 27 And, behold, in consequence of this, I stretched out My hand against thee, and diminished thy allotted food-supply, and gave thee over to the will of thy enemies, the daughters of the Philistines, who, heathen as they are, blushed at thy sins. 28 Thou didst sin also with the Assyrians, still craving more idols; thou didst copy their heathenism also, and still, thou wast not satisfied. 29 Thou didst therefore, further, increase thy idolatry by adopting that of Chaldea—the land of traders, and, even then, thou wast not satisfied.

The prophet now breaks out into irony. Israel, he says, is different from others. They may act for reward; she has been urged only by love of her sins.

30 How loving is thy heart![5] saith the Lord Jehovah, that thou doest all this, like a woman who is her own mistress, with none to check her! 31 that thou buildest the canopy for thy altars at every meeting of the roads, and raisest thy high place in every street, and yet wast not like a harlot, since thou hast not sought pay. 32 O thou adulterous wife, who takest up with strangers instead of keeping to thy husband! 33 A price is given to every harlot, but thou, instead, hast bestowed thy gifts on all thy lovers,

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[1] Lit., "blood."
[2] Isa. lvii. 8.
[3] Ezek. xvi. 26–29.
[4] Lit., "great of flesh."
[5] Ezek. xvi. 30–34.

and hast hired them to come to thee from all parts, to commit wickedness with thee.[1] 34 Thou hast been the opposite of other women in thy sins; thou hast not been gone after, but thyself hast gone after thy lovers; thou hast given pay, not gotten it; thou art, indeed, different from others!

The husband, thus outraged beyond example, cannot, after all this, allow his faithless partner to escape the punishment she has deserved, but must insist, on many grounds, that the severest penalties be inflicted. Those with whom she had sinned are to be the instruments of her shameful and terrible sentence. She must be put to a disgraceful death, as the law demands.

35 Wherefore, O harlot,[2] hear the word of Jehovah. 36 Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, because thy sin was poured out, and thy shame revealed, by thy idolatries with the religions thou lovedst, and with all thy abominable disgusting gods, and by the blood of thy children which thou gavest to them; 37 Behold, therefore, I will gather all who have seduced thee from Me, thy God, and those whom thou hast sought to please, and all whom thou hast loved, with all, also, whom thou hast hated; I will gather them round thee, and disclose thy sin to them, that they may see all thy guilt. 38 And I will judge thee as women are judged who break wedlock and shed blood, and I will shed thy blood, in My fury and jealousy. 39 I will give thee, also, into their hand, and they will throw down thy canopies, and break down thy high places; they will strip thee of thy robes; take away thy fine ornaments, and leave thee, once more, naked and bare, as I found thee! 40 They will, further, bring up a multitude against thee, and stone thee with stones, and hew thee in pieces with their swords. 41 And they will burn thy houses with fire, and execute judgments in thee, before the eyes of many women,[3] and I will make thee cease from playing the harlot, and thou shalt give no more unholy hire. 42 Thus will I cool My fury on thee, and My jealousy, which thou hast excited, will turn from thee, fully avenged, and I will have

[1] A thrust at their sending after foreign idolatries.
[2] Ezek. xvi. 35–43.
[3] Other nations.

peace, and be no more angry. 43 Because thou hast forgotten the days of thy youth, and stirred up My indignation by all thy doings, behold, I will let the punishment of thy conduct rest on thy head, saith the Lord Jehovah. Thou wilt not be able to increase thy offences by any new deed of shame.

Jerusalem is, in fact, really a heathen city. Canaan may be called its father and mother; Samaria and Sodom its sisters. In its desperate ungodliness it has even transcended these guiltiest of cities, and must think of this when it suffers a fate as terrible as theirs.

44 Behold,[1] every proverb-monger will repeat this saying against thee: "As is the mother, so is the daughter!" 45 Thou art the true daughter of thy mother, who dishonoured her husband and her children: and thou art the true sister of thy sisters, who dishonoured their husbands and their children;[2] thy mother was a Hittite and thy father an Amorite.[3] 46 Thy elder sister is Samaria, with her daughters, the towns of her territory, who dwell north from thee: thy younger sister, who lives south from thee, is Sodom and her daughters—the towns connected with her. 47 Yet thou hast not contented thyself with walking in their ways, nor in copying their abominations; that was too little for thee to do: thou hast shown thyself still more corrupt than they, in all thy ways! 48 As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, SODOM, thy sister, and her daughters, have not done as thou and thy daughters—the towns of Judah—have done! 49 Behold, the sin of thy sister Sodom was this—pride, through superabundance of the comforts of life, and the corrupting influence of undisturbed security, marked her and her daughters, and she did not help the poor and needy.[4] 50 They were haughty, and committed abomination before Me; therefore I put them away, as thou hast seen.

51 Neither has SAMARIA[5] committed half of thy sins. Thou hast

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[1] **Ezek. xvi. 44–50.**

[2] The Canaanites and Samaria and Sodom alike turned from God and gave up their children as sacrifices to idols.

[3] Jerusalem has shown itself to be in respect to religion a true child of the Canaanites.

[4] Lit., "take hold of the hand of."

[5] **Ezek. xvi. 51–52.**

multiplied thy abominations above hers, and hast made her and her daughters appear righteous, through the excess of abominations thou hast committed. 52 Bear, then, thy shame, thou who hast condemned thy sisters,[1] though thine own greater sins, which made thee an abomination, make them seem righteous in comparison! Blush, and bear thy shame, because, by thy greater sins, thou hast made thy sisters, with all their guilt, appear righteous!

Since, thus, Samaria and Sodom were comparatively less guilty than Jerusalem, there is still hope even for them—that is, for the heathen, of whom they are made the representatives. Jerusalem will be restored, but her return to favour will follow that of the nations she has been wont to despise. In this also she must be utterly humbled.

53 And I will bring back again[2] their banished ones to their homes—the banished ones of Sodom and her daughters, and the banished ones of Samaria and her daughters—and then I will bring back again thy banished ones also, in the midst of them—54 that thou mayest bear thine own disgrace, and be ashamed for all that thou hast done, by the consolation thou givest them when they see thee also punished for thy sins, and find themselves restored through thy means. 55 Thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, will return to their former position, and Samaria and her daughters will return to theirs, and thou and thy daughters will return to theirs. 56 Yet thy sister Sodom's name was not heard in thy mouth in the day of thy pride, before thine own wickedness was made known, 57 (and thou didst despise her) as, at the time of the Syrian oppression, thou thyself wast the reproach of the daughters of Syria, and of all the nations round, who despised thee on every side—the daughters of the Philistines doing so especially.[3]

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[1] Eichhorn translates this difficult clause—"Bear thou the shame which thou thoughtest well deserved by thy sisters," and thinks it is an allusion to the carrying off the inhabitants of Samaria and of the east of the Jordan by Tiglath Pileser.

[2] Ezek. xvi. 53-57.

[3] This is Smend's idea of the meaning of this passage. Ewald refers it to the then present position of Judah. But though the

58 But now[1] thou must bear the punishment of thy lewdness and of thine abominations, saith Jehovah! 59 For thus saith the Lord Jehovah, I will do with thee as thou hast done to Me. Because thou hast despised the solemn oath taken by thee, breaking the covenant thou hadst made with Me:[2] I, now, hold My covenant made with thee as broken!

But God will not cast off His people for ever. He will hereafter make a new, everlasting covenant with them. Jerusalem shall once more be the head of the new theocracy, into which Sodom and Samaria will be received; but this glorious restoration will be due solely to the sovereign favour of God, and thus, as bounty to the undeserving, will call forth humiliation at the remembrance of the guilty past.

60 Yet I will hereafter[3] remember My old covenant with thee, in the days of thy youth, and I will establish with thee an everlasting covenant. 61 Then wilt thou think of thy former ways and be ashamed, when thou takest to thee thy sisters—the elder and the younger,[4] whom I will give thee for daughters, though thou hast no claim to them by thy covenant.[5] 62 And I will establish My covenant with thee, and thou shalt know that I am Jehovah; 63 that thou mayest ponder, and be humiliated, and never more open thy mouth, because of thy shame, when I forgive thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord Jehovah!

Another utterance of Ezekiel, of this time, returns to the special and crowning sin, which was bringing down the last calamities on Judah—the faithlessness of Zede-

Syrian kingdom of Chaldea (as it might be called) was against it, the Philistines had long been crushed. Eichhorn thinks it alludes to the oppression of Assyria, which at the time held Philistia also. But Smend's idea seems best. The Philistines were still very troublesome in the time of the distinctively Syrian war, before the fall of Samaria.

[1] Ezek. xvi. 58, 59.
[2] Ezek. xvi. 8.
[3] Sodom and Samaria.
[4] Ezek. xvi. 60-63.
[5] Or, "though they be not of the covenant."

kiah to his treaty with Nebuchadnezzar. His threatened revolt was clearly self-destruction. He might enjoy a quiet, though inglorious reign, by keeping his oath. To rise against Chaldea meant ruin, not only to himself, but to the kingdom. Nor was it treacherous only. To break an oath made by Jehovah was a high offence against the Divine Majesty, and must bring down bitter punishment.

The prophet begins in figurative language, but lays it aside as he goes on.

1 The word of Jehovah[1] came to me, saying: 2 Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable to the House of Israel, 3 and say: Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, The great eagle[2] with huge wings of vast spread, full of feathers of different colours, came to Lebanon, and took off the topmost branch of a cedar.[3] 4 He plucked away the highest of its twigs,[4] and took it to the Land of Traders,[5] and set it in the city of business men.[6] 5 He took also a vine of the plants of the land,[7] and planted it in a fruitful field,[8] a shoot beside abundant waters; planted it near them, like a willow. 6 And it sprouted and became a trailing vine of low growth, and its branches twined themselves towards the eagle, and its roots were under him. So it became a vine-stock, and gave off runners, and shot forth tendrils.

7 And there was another great eagle,[9] with huge wings and many feathers,[10] and, behold, the vine began to bend its roots and shoot out its branches towards him, from the beds on which it was planted, that he might water it. 8 It was set in good soil, beside abundant waters, to shoot out runners, and bear fruit, and become a goodly vine.

9 Say thou[11]—Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Will it thrive? Shall Nebuchadnezzar not tear up its roots and strip off its fruit,

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[1] **Ezek. xvii. 1-6.** [2] Nebuchadnezzar.
[3] Judah. Jehoiachin was the topmost bough or twig.
[4] Its chief men who were made captives. [5] Chaldea.
[6] Babylon. This refers to Jehoiachin's captivity.
[7] Zedekiah. [8] Judah. [9] **Ezek. xvii. 7, 8.**
[10] Pharaoh Hophra. The Egyptian alliance is here referred to.
[11] **Ezek. xvii. 9, 10.**

so that it will wither, all its shooting leaves drying up, so that no great power or strong army will be needed to pluck it up from the very root? 10 Look there! this newly-set plant—will it thrive? Will it not, if the scorching east wind[1] touch it, wither up wholly?

Will it not wither away in the beds in which it grows?

Another Word that came to Ezekiel on the same subject runs as follows :—

12 Say now to the House of Disobedience :[2] Know ye not what these things mean? Say: Behold the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and took away its king[3] and its princes, and brought them, to himself, to Babylon. 13 He further took a man of the king's blood,[4] and made a covenant with him, and took an oath of him. He carried away, also, the mighty of the land, 14 that it might be weakened, and not rebel, but keep its covenant and stand. 15 But the man revolted, sending ambassadors to Egypt to ask that it might give him cavalry and a strong army. Shall he prosper in his treachery? Will he escape that acts thus? Shall he break his covenant and yet escape? 16 As I live, says the Lord Jehovah, he shall certainly die a prisoner in the midst of Babylon, where the king lives who made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he broke. 17 And Pharaoh will do nothing for him in the war, and will send no great army and great multitudes of men, as he has promised, when the mounts are thrown up and battering rams are raised against Jerusalem, to slay many! 18 Zedekiah has despised his oath, and broken his bond, when, lo, he had given his hand for it, and having done all this, he shall not escape! 19 Therefore, thus saith the Lord Jehovah, as I live, I will surely repay[5] on his own head My oath that he has despised, and My covenant that he has broken. 20 And I will spread My net over him, and he shall be taken in My snare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and reckon[6] with him there for his treachery that he has committed against Me. 21 And

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[1] The Chaldeans. For the east wind, or sirocco, see vol. v. p. 381.

[2] Ezek. xvii. 11–21.

[3] Jehoiachin.

[4] Zedekiah.

[5] Lit., "lay."

[6] Plead.

all his chosen ones, and all his forces, shall fall by the sword, and those who escape shall be scattered to every wind, and ye shall know that I, Jehovah, have spoken.

But though God will thus bring on Zedekiah and Judah the punishment of their revolt against Chaldea, as a sin against His own Majesty—the oath by Him having been dishonoured—He will, hereafter, restore the kingdom of David—under the long promised Messiah—and all men will see that, though He seemed to have stood aloof, and to have left Israel without His care, He has, through all the incidents of its bitter experience, been guiding the course of things so as to bring about the final glory of His kingdom among men.

22 Thus saith the Lord Jehovah:[1] I will further take of the highest branch[2] of the cedar, and will plant it: from the highest of its young shoots I will pluck off a tender one, and plant it on a high and lofty mountain.[3] 23 In the lofty mountain of Israel will I plant it, and it will send forth boughs and bear fruit, and be a noble cedar, and all birds of every kind will dwell under it; in the shadow of its branches will they dwell. 24 And all the trees of the field[4] shall know that it was I, Jehovah, who have brought low the high tree and exalted the humble one,[5] and have made the withered tree to flourish again. I, Jehovah, have spoken and will do it.

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[1] **Ezek. xvii. 22–24.**

[2] "Foliage," *Mühlau und Volck.* The royal house of David is meant—the Messiah so long expected being especially referred to.

[3] Zion.

[4] The heathen nations.

[5] The high tree is Zedekiah, and includes also Jehoiachin. The humble tree is the promised Messiah

## CHAPTER II.

### THE CRISIS AS IT APPEARED TO EZEKIEL.

THE great question of the Divine relations to man's conduct in this life had long been the subject of agitating discussion and reflection, since social and national trouble had darkened the life of Judah. Asaph had recorded his perplexities regarding it in his famous psalm,[1] and others had followed in the same strain. The Book of Job embodied the difficulties that clouded pious minds, and gave the true solution, but to the mass of men the problem was still dark and anxious. Among the multitude, alike in Judah and on the Chebar, the ways of Providence were bitterly arraigned as unjust. The present generation, they maintained, though not so guilty as others before it, were punished, while their fathers had escaped. "The fathers," they said, in a sententious way, "ate sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."[2] Nor were specious arguments wanting to support this self-righteous commentary on

[1] Psalm lxxiii.

[2] Lit., "blunted, dulled." Unripe grapes are still much eaten in Syria, with the result that a sensation of discomfort in the teeth always follows for a short time. Delitzsch, *Hiob*, xv. 33. Prov. x. 26. In Hor., *Od.*, III. vi. 1, the same sentiment is expressed.

the experience of the nation, in these, its last years. The godly Josiah had died in his early prime, and Zedekiah, who was sinking amidst the ruin of his country, had characteristics that drew forth the sympathy of even such men as Jeremiah.[1] The prophets, moreover, often spoke of the Divine judgments impending, as the results of the conduct of Manasseh,[2] and the threats of other parts of Scripture to visit the punishment of sin on the third and fourth generation, seemed to be exactly fulfilled on Josiah and his sons—the grandson and great-grandsons of the wicked king.[3] Nor was this confined to individuals. The people at large appeared as if doomed to suffer for the sins of their ancestors. Josiah's Reformation, it might be said, had brought no blessing, since public misfortune dated from his reign. The doctrine of hereditary punishment for ancestral guilt, had sprung from a misconception of some verses of Scripture, and was at once old and popular.[4] A wider study of the sacred books would, indeed, have led to juster views,[5] but men were too wretched to think calmly; too bitter to weigh their words. Like us all, they were glad to blame others rather than themselves, and to take the air of being treated unjustly.

It was of great moment, for the vindication of the eternal justice of God, that such thoughts, whether honest or affected, should be challenged, and the great lesson enforced that men were, in reality, responsible only for

[1] Jer. xxxviii.

[2] 2 Kings xxiii. 26; xxiv. 3. Jer. xv. 4; xxxii. 18. Lam. v. 7.

[3] Exod. xx. 5; xxxiv. 7. Lev. xxvi. 39. Num. xiv. 18–33. Deut. v. 9. Isa. xiv. 21; lxv. 7. Jer. ii. 9.

[4] Gen. ix. 25. 2 Sam. xxi. Ps. cix. 14. Job. xxi. 9. Matt. xxvii. 25. John ix. 2. Jer. xviii. 19.

[5] 2 Kings xiv. 6. Deut. xxiv. 16.

their own sins. This Ezekiel did in the next fragment of his preaching that remains to us.

1 The word of Jehovah,[1] came to me again, saying: 2 What do you mean by this proverb in the Land of Israel: "The fathers ate sour grapes and the teeth of the sons are set on edge"? 3 As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, Ye shall not use this proverb any more in Israel. 4 For all souls are Mine; as the soul of the father, so that of the son, is Mine. The soul that sins, it will die!

5 But if a man be just,[2] and do what is lawful and right; 6 if he have not eaten heathen sacrifices on the high places on the hills, nor lifted up his eyes in worship to the loathsome gods of the House of Israel, nor defiled his neighbour's wife, nor approached an unclean woman, 7 nor oppressed any one; if he have returned to the poor debtor the pledge given by him;[3] if he has taken goods from no one by fraud and injustice,[4] if he has given his bread to the hungry, and covered the naked with clothing; 8 if he has not lent on usury,[5] or taken interest;[6] if he has kept back his hand from iniquity, and has given honest judgment between man and man, in their disputes; 9 if he has walked in My laws and kept My commands, acting truly in all things—he is just; he will surely live, saith the Lord Jehovah!

10 If, however,[7] such a man beget a violent son, a shedder of blood; though he, the father, has done all that has been said, 11 yet if he, the son, has done none of all this, but has, instead, eaten idol-meats at the high places on the hills, defiled his neighbour's wife, 12 oppressed the poor and needy, taken away men's goods by fraud or injustice, lifted up his eyes in worship to the loathsome gods, committed abomination, 13 lent money on usury, and taken interest; shall he, then, live? He shall not live! He has committed all these abominations. To death with him! His blood lies on himself!

14 But if this ungodly son[8] beget a son who sees all his father's

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[1] Ezek. xviii. 1–4. [2] Ezek. xviii. 5–9.

[3] Exod. xxii. 25. Deut. xxiv. 12. Amos ii. 8. [4] Lev. vi. 4.

[5] Advances to men on their crops, etc., are meant.

[6] This was forbidden, at least between Israelites. Ezek. xviii. 18. Neh. v. 7, 10 ff. See also Exod. xxii. 24. Deut. xxiii. 20. Lev. xxv. 36. Prov. xxviii. 8. Ps. xv. 5.

[7] Ezek. xviii. 10–13. [8] Ezek. xviii. 14–17.

sins which he has done; sees them, and keeps from doing them; 15 if he has not eaten idol-meats at the high places on the hills, nor lifted up his eyes to the loathsome idols of the House of Israel in worship, nor defiled his neighbour's wife, 16 nor oppressed any one, nor kept back any pledge, nor spoiled any of his goods by fraud or injustice, but has given his bread to the hungry, covered the naked with clothing, 17 kept back his hand from iniquity, taken no usury or interest, but has kept My commands and walked in My laws; He shall not die for his father's sin. He shall surely live!

18 His father, however,[1] because *he* cruelly oppressed, robbed his brother Hebrew by fraud and injustice, and did what was not good among his fellow tribesmen,[2] behold, *he* shall die for his iniquity.

19 But do ye still say,[3] "Why does not the son bear a share of the father's sin?" I answer, If the son has done only what is lawful and right, and has kept all My laws, and obeyed them, he shall surely live!

20 The soul that sins,[4] *it* shall die. But a son shall not bear any part of his father's sin, nor shall the father bear any part of the son's sin. The righteousness of the righteous shall rest on him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall rest upon *him*.

21 But if the wicked[5] turn from all his sins that he has committed, and keep all My laws, and do what is lawful and right—he shall surely live. He shall not die. 22 All his transgressions that he has committed shall not be remembered against him. He shall live, for the righteousness he has done. 23 Have I any pleasure, do you think, in the death of the wicked? saith the Lord Jehovah. Would I not much rather that he turn from his ways and live?

24 When, on the other hand,[6] the righteous turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, doing according to all that the wicked does—shall he live? No! All his righteousness that he has done shall not be remembered. For his unfaithfulness that he has committed, and for his sin that he has sinned, for them—he shall die.

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[1] **Ezek. xviii. 18.**
[2] Lev. xix. 16.
[3] **Ezek. xviii. 19.**
[4] **Ezek. xviii. 20.**
[5] **Ezek. xviii. 21-23.**
[6] **Ezek. xviii. 24.**

25 Nevertheless ye say:[1] The way of the Lord is not right.' Hear. now, O House of Israel, is not My way right? Are not your ways wrong? 26 If the righteous turn away from his righteousness, and commits iniquity, and dies for it—then he dies for the iniquity that he has committed. 27 But if the wicked turn away from the wickedness that he has committed, and does that which is lawful and right, he shall preserve his soul alive. 28 Because he sees and turns away from all his transgressions that he has committed, he shall surely live—he shall not die. 29 Yet the House of Israel says—"The way of the Lord is not right." O House of Israel, are not My ways right? Are not your ways wrong?

30 Therefore, I will judge you,[3] every one according to his ways, saith the Lord Jehovah. Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, that your sin may not cause your punishment. 31 Cast away from you all your transgressions, in which you have sinned, and make for yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will ye die, O House of Israel? 32 For I have no pleasure in the death of Him that dies, saith the Lord Jehovah. Therefore, turn ye—and live!

In these anxious, agitated years, when the exiles in Babylonia, like watchers by the death bed of the State, could think or speak of little else but the land they had left for ever—its old glories, its present sorrows—their poets doubtless sang the bright memories of the one, and the touching story of the others, in many a lyric and lament. Ezekiel, a true patriot, like all the prophets, unburdened his heart in a lament over the two kings of his race then captive; the one in Egypt, the other in Babylon, and over the city which, like every Jew, he loved with a passionate tenderness. He had spoken of the inevitable ruin of his fatherland through its sins, and the fate of the country brought up in his mind that of its princes—the living dead—whose glory had faded, whose

[1] Ezek. xviii. 25-29.

[2] Lit., "evenly poised." It may mean—"consistent at all times."

[3] Ezek. xviii. 30-32.

eyes should never again behold Jerusalem, whose palace had been exchanged for a prison! In a touching elegy, he compares Judah, the mother of kings, to a lioness lying down amidst others of its kind—the kingdoms round it. Her successive generations of young and brave princes are lions' whelps, coming on in due time to full growth, as crowned kings. Two, in particular, arrest his thoughts—each in his turn snared by the hunters and carried off captive—Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin, or Zedekiah, one hardly knows which.

2 What was thy mother, O Judah?—he sang[1]—A lioness which lay down among lions, and nourished her young amidst other young lions.[2] 3 There, she brought up one of her whelps till he grew to his strength,[3] and learned to catch prey, and became a man-eater. 4 But the nations heard of him; he was taken in their pit,[4] and they brought him with rings in his jaws[5] to the land of Egypt.[6]

5 Then,[7] when she saw that her Hope was lost and gone, she took another of her young, and brought it up, and it, also, became a young lion. 6 And he went to and fro among the lions, and was himself a young lion,[8] and learned to catch prey, and became a man-eater. 7 He searched through their palaces,[9] and

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[1] **Ezek. xix. 1–4.**

[2] The kings of Judah were not behind the princes of other countries round.

[3] Gen. xlix. 9, lit., "a young lion." The "young lion" is the animal in its first splendour of young vigour.

[4] A common way of taking lions.

[5] Isa. xxxvii. 20. See vol. iv. p. 457. Wild beasts were led by rings in their nostrils or jaws, and captives whom it was specially wished to insult were treated in the same way. See vol. v. p. 90; also Ezek. xxxviii. 4, xxix. 4; 2 Kings, xix. 28; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11.

[6] Jehoahaz is alluded to. He was carried off to Egypt by Necho, after his father Josiah's death at Megiddo.

[7] **Ezek. xix. 5–7.** [8] A crowned king.

[9] *Arnheim.* No other meaning of this clause seems tenable.

laid waste their cities; the land was desolate; its multitude fleeing in terror at the noise of his roar.[1]

8 Yet the nations,[2] from many [3] countries, set themselves against him round about, and spread their net over him, and took him in their pit. 9 Then they put him in a cage, with rings in his jaws, and brought him to the king of Babylon; they brought him into a lofty stronghold, that his voice should no more be heard on the mountains of Israel.[4]

Such was the fate of the kings; that of the people was to be equally disastrous. Israel had been a powerful nation, ruling for a time from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean, and boasting a line of kings, who, in Judah, had sat on the throne, in continuous descent from David, for nearly five hundred years. Its pride and sin, however, had brought terrible punishment. Ten tribes, out of twelve, had been exiles in a distant land for nearly a hundred and fifty years, and Judah itself had seen the flower of its people carried off to Babylonia. What remained of its glory was fast waning; the now feeble State was tottering to its final ruin.

These ideas the prophet embodies in his former image of the fatherland as a once lordly vine, the wood of which had been so massive as to serve for kingly

[1] This could hardly be applied, except by poetic license, to Jehoiachin (Jeconiah), who reigned only three months. Zedekiah may have been engaged in wars; his predecessors had no opportunity for them. If, however, the language be taken as that of poetry, the lament would suit Jehoiachin better than Zedekiah, for the former was appointed king by his countrymen; the latter was a Chaldean nominee. Ezekiel, moreover, seems to have regarded Jehoiachin as the legitimate king on this account. Ezek. xvii. 1. Besides, he bitterly denounced the breach of oath by Zedekiah, and on this ground showed him no respect.

[2] **Ezek. xix. 8, 9.** [3] Lit., "the."

[4] Nothing is known of the place of imprisonment of either Jehoiachin or Zedekiah in Babylon.

sceptres. In its pride it had shot out its branches far and near, but the burning sirocco had been let loose on it; its stout branches had withered and been broken off, and fire had consumed it.

10 Thy mother,[1] O Judah, mightest thou further compare to a vine[2] planted by the waters. She was fruitful and had many branches by reason of the abundance of water; 11 its boughs grew so thick they made sceptres for rulers, and its height rose towering amidst the clouds; so glorious did it seem in its loftiness, in the multitude of its branches![3]

12 But the wrath of God, like a tempest from heaven, rooted it up, and cast it to the ground, and the burning sirocco from the desert dried up its fruit; its strong branches were broken off and withered; the fire consumed them. 13 And, now, it is planted in the wilderness,[4] in a dry and thirsty land, 14 and fire has gone from its branches, so rich in shoots, and has devoured its fruit, so that it has no longer any lordly rod for a sceptre to rule.

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[1] **Ezek. xix. 10-14.**

[2] This clause is variously translated; different emendations being given of the words, "in thy blood," which are apparently a corruption of the text. I adopt the rendering of De Wette.

[3] "It was seen far and near from its height and the multitude of its branches."—*Smend.* The ancient sceptre (Shabet) and the staff (Matteh), used as a sign of rank by heads of tribes, clans, and encampments, by judges and others, was a simple rod, in its natural state—the leaves and twigs only removed. The Arab Sheiks and the Mahomedan Mufti and Ulemas—the equivalent to our clergy—still carry such a rude staff, as high as themselves, never appearing in public without it. When office is hereditary, as in the case of Sheiks, the staff passes from father to son till it is worn quite thin where the hand has grasped it. It was this ancestral chieftain's staff on which Jacob leaned in worship (Gen. xlvii. 31); and the rods of Moses and Aaron were, in the same way, the ordinary signs of official dignity. Tamar demanded this Matteh from Judah—knowing its special worth as an unmistakable means of identifying him, and even with this he parted for the time. Gen. xxxviii. 18. See *Neil*, pp. 160 ff.

[4] Exiled.

All this may well raise a song of lamentation, now and hereafter!

A long discourse, delivered by Ezekiel in August, B.C. 592,[1] the fourth year before the destruction of Jerusalem, and the seventh of the captivity of king Jeconiah, has fortunately been preserved. As was their custom from time to time, since the prophet did not appear in public, some of the elders of the Hebrew settlement on the Chebar came to him, "to enquire of Jehovah"; sitting down, in Eastern fashion, on the mats on the floor of the room, while he rested on the divan or sofa-like ledge that ran along its side. He had previously told them,[2] that God would have no relations with insincere worshippers, outwardly paying Him homage, while, in heart, idolators, and he repeated this now.[3] As long as they were still heathen in spirit, they could expect no communications from Jehovah, through His prophet. The opportunity to bring their sins, and those of the people at large, once more under notice was, nevertheless, too favourable to be lost. The impulse "to judge them," by rehearsing anew the sins laid to their charge, and proclaiming afresh the certain result, was irresistible. How best to rouse their conscience must have been a matter of anxious thought; perhaps if he recalled to their minds the sins of their forefathers and its terrible punishment, the vivid parallel to their own case might arrest them. Addressing them, therefore, he thus began, speaking in the name of God,—

5 Thus saith the Lord Jehovah; [4] In the day that I chose Israel, and lifted up My hand in an oath to the seed of the House of Jacob, that I would be their God, and revealed Myself to them in the land of Egypt,[5] when I lifted up My hand to them, swearing

[1] Smend says B.C. 590.
[2] Ezek. xiv. 1–11.
[3] Ezek. xx. 1–4.
[4] Ezek. xx. 5–8.
[5] Exod. iii. 8; iv. 31. Deut. iv. 34.

by Myself, "I am Jehovah your God;"[1]—6 even in that day when I lifted up My hand thus to them, promising that I would lead them forth from Egypt,[2] to a land I had looked out for them —a land flowing with milk and honey, the glory of all lands[3]— 7 I said to them—"Cast ye away, every man, the abominable gods to which he looks, and do not defile yourselves with the loathsome gods of Egypt.[4] I am Jehovah, your God" 8 But they were disobedient, and would not hearken to Me; they did not, every man, cast away the abominable gods to which they looked, nor did they forsake the loathsome gods of Egypt. For this, therefore, I threatened to pour out My wrath on them, and to let loose My anger against them, in the land of Egypt.

9 Yet I acted[5] for the honour of My own name, so that it should not be dishonoured before the heathen, in whose midst they were, in whose sight I had revealed Myself to them, as about to bring them forth from the land of Egypt.[6] 10 I led them, therefore, forth from the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. 11 And there, at Sinai, I gave them My laws, and made known to them My statutes, by which, if a man do them, he shall live.[7] 12 I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between Me and them, that it was I, Jehovah, who sanctify them by these holy seasons; bringing them thus into special communion with Myself.[8] 13 But the House of Israel rebelled against Me in the

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[1] Exod. xx. 2.

[2] Exod. iii. 8–17. Deut. viii. 7, 9. Jer. xxxii. 22.

[3] Ps. xlviii. 2. Dan. viii. 9. Zech. vii. 14.

[4] Lev. xvii. 7; xviii. 3.

[5] **Ezek. xx. 9-13.**

[6] Exod. xxxii. 12. Num. xiv. 16. Deut. ix. 28.

[7] Lev. xviii. 5. Deut. xxx. 16.

[8] Wellhausen (*Gesch. Israel*, vol. i. p. 117) would have us believe that the Sabbath was originally a day of festivity, and only gradually darkened into gloom under priestly influence during the exile. The agony of the Shunammite widow at the death of her son (2 Kings iv. 22), leading her to order her ass for an instant journey to the prophet, is taken as a proof that journeys longer than were legal on Sabbaths were then common, and that daily occupations were not forbidden. For does not the servant answer that it is neither new moon nor Sabbath? In Hos. ii. 11 it is said, "I will cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new

wilderness; they did not follow My laws, and they despised My statutes, by which a man shall live, if he do them; and they grossly dishonoured My Sabbaths, so that I said I would pour out My indignation upon them in the wilderness, to destroy them.

14 But I acted for the honour[1] of My name, so that it should not be dishonoured before the heathen, in whose sight I had brought them forth from Egypt. 15 Yet I lifted up My hand to them in the wilderness in solemn asseveration, that I would *not* bring them into the land which I had given them—a land flowing with milk and honey—the glory of all lands! 16 I did this because they despised My statutes and did not walk in My laws, and dishonoured My Sabbaths, for their hearts went after their loathsome gods. 17 But My eye spared them, so that I did not utterly destroy them, or make an end of them altogether in the wilderness.[2]

18 But though the fathers were condemned to die in the wilderness, I said to their sons, "Walk ye not[3] in the laws of your fathers, nor observe their statutes, nor defile yourselves with

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moons, her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts." In Amos the extortioners of Samaria long for the Sabbath to sell their grain (viii. 5). Are not these, we are asked, proofs that the Sabbath was *anciently* a day of rejoicing and worldly business? As if a modest joy were incompatible with the right observance of the Sabbath, or the worldliness of extortioners an illustration of its proper use! That it is said, moreover, in Exodus and Deuteronomy, that the labourer and his beast are to rest on the Sabbath, while it is not said (?) that the master should rest! shows that the idea of the day as one of universal rest must be later! It is on such arguments as these that the origin of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers,—or nearly the whole of them—during the Captivity, is assumed as demonstrated. As if the lax practice could not naturally come in by degrees, and be uprooted only by a reaction such as the exile produced! Of course, however, while repudiating the insinuation that the ancient Jewish Sabbath was a mere boisterous holiday, I do not forget that the superstitious and painful slavery, which the Rabbis invented as its proper observance, was then unknown.

[1] Ezek. xx. 14–17.

[2] Only that generation was to perish in the wilderness.

[3] Ezek. xx. 18–21.

their loathsome gods. 19 I am Jehovah, your God; walk in My laws, and keep My statutes, and do them; 20 and hallow My Sabbaths, that they may be a sign between Me and you, that ye may know that I, Jehovah, am your God." 21 Yet these sons, like their fathers, rebelled against Me, and did not walk in My laws, or keep My statutes, to do them, by which, if a man keep them, he shall live, and they dishonoured My Sabbaths. Then I told them that I would pour out My indignation upon them, and let loose My anger against them in the wilderness.

22 Nevertheless,[1] I held back My hand, and acted for the honour of My name, that it should not be dishonoured in the sight of the heathen, before whom I had brought them forth from Egypt. 23 But I lifted up My hand to them in the wilderness once more, and solemnly swore that I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through the lands,[2] 24 because they had not obeyed My statutes, but had despised My laws, and dishonoured My Sabbaths, and their hearts had gone after the loathsome gods of their fathers. 25 And since they would not observe My good laws, I afterwards, when they had entered Canaan, gave them laws that were not good, as Mine are, and statutes by which they should not live—statutes leading to death, not to life, as Mine do—26 that is, I left them to follow the heathenism of Canaan, and polluted them in their own offerings, by giving them up to sacrifice their firstborn sons to Moloch, that I might appal them at their own conduct, and that they might know that I am Jehovah![3]

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[1] **Ezek. xx. 22–26.** [2] Lev. xxvi. Deut. xxviii.

[3] Smend actually ventures to quote this verse as proving that Jehovah instituted human sacrifices! Ewald very justly refers the hard laws to the claim by Jehovah of all the firstborn (Exod. xiii. 11–13), "which the prophet speaks of as a *defiling*, because it was a short step from this to offering firstborn sons to Moloch (see ver. 31), and because this often happened" through a perversion of the Divine law, which imposed only a slight redemption money on the parents, in lieu of the claim on their child. See Lev. xviii. 21; Deut. xviii. 10. Compare, for language similar to that of Ezekiel, Rom. i. 24; Acts vii. 42; 2 Thess. ii. 11. Jerome says, "God gave them, when dispersed among the nations, laws that were not good—that is, He gave them up to their own

27 Therefore,[1] speak to the House of Israel, O son of man, and say to them: Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Your fathers still further sinned against Me by acting treacherously towards Me. 28 For, when I had brought them into the land which I had sworn to give them,[2] they looked with idolatrous eyes on every high hill and every thickly leaved tree, and there offered their sacrifices, and presented the bitter offence of their offerings:[3] and burnt their sweet smelling incense, and poured out their drink offerings to their idols, 29 till men came to say, "What is the Bamah—the high place? It is that to which the Baim—those going to commit uncleanness—betake themselves," and thus its name is Bamah (in this sense) to this day.[4]

30 Therefore,[5] say to the House of Israel, Thus says the Lord Jehovah: Are you polluted in the same way as your fathers? Do you commit uncleanness with your abominable idols? 31 Do you defile yourselves to this day with all your loathsome gods, presenting them your offerings, and making your sons pass through the fire to them—and shall I allow Myself to be enquired of by you, O House of Israel? As I live, says the Lord Jehovah, I will not allow Myself to be enquired of by you. 32 And what you think in your minds, "that you will be like the heathen—like the people of other countries—and worship wood and stone," shall not come to pass. 33 As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I will be King over you, yes, with a mighty hand, and an outstretched arm, and with an outpouring of fierce indignation; 34 and I will lead you forth from among the peoples, and gather you from the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with an outpouring of fierce indignation, 35 and will bring you into the wilderness of

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thoughts and desires, that they should do what was not for their good," *ad loc.* As to the relation of God to human sacrifices, see Jer. vii. 31; xxxii. 35, and other passages.

[1] **Ezek. xx. 27-29.**

[2] Lit., "lifted up My hand." [3] Their "corban."

[4] *Baim*, from the verb "to come," was taken in a bad sense, as implying "coming to commit fornication," and was used in this way as a verbal play on the word "Bamah," a high place. To go thither and to commit uncleanness were assumed as identical.

[5] **Ezek. xx. 30-38.**

the nations,[1] between this Canaan and Babylon, and there will I hold judgment on you, face to face. 36 As I held judgment on your fathers in the wilderness between Canaan and Egypt, so, I will hold judgment on *you*, saith the Lord Jehovah! 37 And I will there carefully separate the good from the bad, as a shepherd, standing at the gate of the fold, lets his sheep pass out under his staff one by one, to count their number and see their state; and I will bring you under the yoke of My new covenant,[2] 38 and I will separate from among you the rebellious, and those who sin against Me. And I will bring those from the land of their sojourning, where they are exiles,[3] but these shall not enter into the land of Israel; that ye may know that I am Jehovah!

## But God will not cast off His people for ever!

39 As for you,[4] O House of Israel; thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Go, serve every one, his loathsome gods; yet, hereafter, ye will surely hearken to Me, and not pollute My holy name any more with your idolatrous offerings, and with your loathsome gods;[5] 40 for on My holy mountain, Zion; on the lofty mountain of Israel, saith the Lord Jehovah; there, shall all the House of Israel serve Me, all of them in the holy land; there, will I receive them

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[1] Where many peoples—Syrians, Arabs, and others, from all parts—pass and repass.

[2] This, which is the literal rendering as the text stands, does not appear to some a suitable sense. Various emendations have therefore been proposed. Hitzig proposes, "into the purifying crucible." The Sept. reads, "I will bring you in by number." Smend conjectures that the words should run, "I bring you, when numbered, or by number, into the land."

[3] *Rosenmüller. Schroeder.*

[4] **Ezek. xx. 39–44.**

[5] The text demands this emendation, which is supported by Ewald, Hävernick, Keil, and Smend—that is, by men of all Shades of opinion. Arnheim renders the passage, "Go and serve every one his idols, since ye will not listen to Me; only, dishonour not My holy Name any longer by your gifts and your idols!" So Noyes, and De Wette. The Sept. has, "put away each one his *evil* ways, and hereafter, if ye hearken to Me, then ye shall no more profane My holy Name by your gifts and your doings (ways)."

generously when they approach Me in worship, and there will I Myself call for their heave offerings, and your choicest gifts, of all you consecrate to Me.[1] 41 With a sweet odour of rest and delight will I accept you, when I lead you forth from the nations, and gather you out of the countries in which you have been scattered, and I will show myself holy in My dealings towards you, in the eyes of the heathen. 42 And ye shall know that I am Jehovah, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the land which I swore[2] to give to your fathers. 43 And then ye shall remember your ways, and all your doings, by which ye have defiled yourselves, and ye will loathe yourselves in your own eyes, for all your sins that ye have committed. 44 And ye shall know that I am Jehovah, when I deal with you in mercy, and for My Name's sake; not according to your corrupt doings, O House of Israel, saith the Lord Jehovah!

But it was of no avail that Ezekiel preached thus on the Chebar, or Jeremiah in Jerusalem. The Egyptian party had gained the upper hand, alike in Babylonia and in Judah, and Zedekiah was being steadily pushed to open revolt. Another series of appeals of the banished prophet to his fellow-exiles has come down to us, and shows that the people still cherished a vain hope of shaking off the Chaldean vassalage. The addresses seem to have been delivered in the third and second year[3] before the fall of the Holy City, when Babylon was already on the eve of marching against his rebellious countrymen. What none had believed when foretold by him, was now, at last, plainly close at hand. Roused to pitiless fury by the ingratitude of Zedekiah, his creature, and by his faithlessness, Nebuchadnezzar was preparing to burst from the north-east, where Ezekiel lived, like a destroying storm, on Judah, far to the south. Yet as a man, a Jew, a priest banished from his country and

[1] Choicest = lit., "first of all you consecrate to me," "of all your holy things."

[2] "Lifted up my hand."

[3] That is in B.C. 591 and 590

its temple, the calamity, though so long anticipated, well nigh overpowered the prophet as it approached. The march of the Chaldean army seemed before him, in its successive stages. He almost counted the hours till it should invest Jerusalem. Might there not be some repentance even yet—if not in the doomed city, at least among the exiles? Alas, it was hopeless. A great blow in his own household was to bring the sad truth home to him, and teach him that he was henceforth to be silent till the inevitable judgment had fallen. His wife, whom he dearly loved, died suddenly at this time, and her death was used as a Divine sign. He was not to weep for the dead! She was gone! And, so, his brethren might spare their laments for their country; nothing could save it!

In the first of these new utterances the prophet pictures Judah, with its towns and villages, as a forest in the south—for it lay in that direction from the Chebar. Fire, kindled by God Himself, through His instrument Nebuchadnezzar, breaks out in it, and no one can quench it.

45 The word of Jehovah came to Me;[1] 46 Son of man, set thy face toward the south, and speak southwards, against the forests of the open country, 47 and say to the southern forest: Hear the word of Jehovah! Thus saith the Lord Jehovah; Behold, I kindle a fire in thee, and it will devour every green tree in thee, and every dry. Its flaming fire shall not be quenched, and every face, from south to north, will be lighted up by it. 48 And all flesh shall see that I, Jehovah, have kindled it, and that no one can quench it!

Eagerly clinging to their wild hope for their country, the exiled community affected not to understand these

[1] Ezek. xx. 45–49. The 21st chapter begins here in the Hebrew Bible.

metaphors and parables, so natural to Ezekiel, but they had no cause of such a complaint in a discourse delivered to them a little later.

2 Son of man,[1] said the Inner Voice to him, set thy face toward Jerusalem, and pour out thy words towards the holy places, and preach against the land of Israel, 3 and say to it: Thus saith Jehovah—Behold, I come against thee and unsheathe My sword, and destroy from out of thee both the righteous and the wicked! 4 Therefore, because I have resolved to destroy both the righteous and the wicked from out of thee, My sword will go forth from its sheath against all flesh, from south to north of the land; 5 that all flesh may know that it is I, Jehovah, who have drawn My sword out of its scabbard, and that I will not sheathe it again. 6 Sigh, therefore, thou son of man, as if thy loins were breaking; sigh bitterly before their eyes! 7 And when they say to thee, "Why sighest thou?" Say, "For the report that has come to my ears!" For every heart shall melt, and all hands fall down, and every spirit despair, and all knees shake.[2] Behold, what has been foretold, is come, and is being carried out! says the Lord Jehovah.

The same terrible warning was soon after repeated in a different form. The destruction so imminent had been pictured as a great conflagration; it was now presented as a grand carnival of the sword! "The word of Jehovah" again came to the prophet, saying:—

9 Son of man,[3] prophesy, and say: Thus says Jehovah: Say, A Sword, a Sword is sharpened and whetted; 10 sharpened to make a sore slaughter; whetted that it may flash like the lightning! Woe to thee, O Staff, the sceptre of my son Judah—this sword despises all such weak rods![4] 11 It has been whetted that it may

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[1] Ezek. xxi. 1-7. [2] Melt into water. [3] Ezek. xxi. 8-13.

[4] This passage is so corrupt that any rendering of it must be conjectural. Gesenius translates it, "It is sharpened against the prince of the tribe of my son (Judah) who despises all wood"—that is, all the lighter punishments of the past. Ewald, "No weak rod of my son, the feeblest of wood." Wellhausen, "Not

be grasped in the hand! Yes! it is sharpened and whetted, to give it to the hand of the slayer! 12 Cry and howl, O son of man! for it is about to descend on My people; on all the princes of Israel! They are reserved for the sword, along with My people! Smite therefore on thy thigh, in sign of great sorrow![1] 13 For the sword has been proved, and what has it shown itself? As if it were a weak rod? No! verily not![2]

14 Thou, therefore,[3] son of man, prophesy, and smite your hands together in despair; the sword doubles, aye, trebles its fury; it slays the multitude; it slays the great; it searches into the inmost chamber.[4] 15 That their hearts may despair, and that many may fall, I have set the flashing sword before all her gates! Ah! how it glitters like lightning; how it is whetted for the slaughter! 16 Up, Sword! smite eagerly on the right! turn swiftly to the right! turn swiftly to the left! Turn whithersoever thou art appointed! 17 I, Jehovah, will smite My hands together against them, in fierce indignation, and let loose My wrath! I, Jehovah have said it.

Hitherto Ezekiel had spoken in figures, but the time had come to speak plainly. His countrymen are to be

weak as the rod; not the most contemptible of all wood." Arnheim, "A glittering terror; a scourge that makes men howl; sparing no tree." Noyes, "Or shall we make mirth? The staff of my son depiseth every rod." De Wette, substantially as in the text above. Eichhorn, "Ah thou (Zedekiah), who bearest the kingly staff, the sceptre of My people; the sword laughs at every such bit of wood!"

[1] To smite on the thigh is often used as a token of great trouble of mind. See Jer. xxxi. 19. *Iliad*, xii. 162; xv. 397. Plutarch also tells us, that when Fabius saw his men flee, he gave a great groan and smote on his thigh.

[2] *Ewald.* Eichhorn's rendering of this passage, which is so corrupt in its text as to defy translators, is, "The proof is made: how? should not the sword mock at the mere rod?"

[3] **Ezek. xxi. 14–17.**

[4] *Eichhorn.* De Wette is virtually the same. Only a guess at the meaning can be made in this, as in the other instances of defective text I have noted.

told that Nebuchadnezzar is, already, virtually, on the march against Judah and Ammon, which have both thrown off their allegiance. It was a question, to which he would first turn; the people of Jerusalem hoping that he would march against Ammon before attacking their own city, and thus give them full time to prepare, and to summon to their aid [1] the Egyptian army on which they depended. But, contrary to this, the prophet announces that Jehovah will send the Chaldean king directly against Jerusalem. He is, therefore, pictured as standing at the parting of the roads to Ammon and the Holy City, uncertain which to enter, and consulting his oracle for direction. But Jehovah gives the answer. Even this warning, however, may fall on deaf ears; if so, the heavier will the fearful vengeance of the Almighty burst on the perjured Zedekiah and on his princes.

18 The word of Jehovah came to me again, saying: [2] 19 Son of man! Fix [3] on two roads by which the sword of the king of Babel may come; let both run out from one country, and hew thee a fingerpost [4] such as stands at the head of the way to a city. 20 Let it point in one direction so that the sword may come to Rabbath of the Ammonites, [5] and in the other, that it may come to Judah and the strong-walled Jerusalem! 21 For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the roads, at the head of the two ways, to use divination as to which he should take. He shakes in a quiver the two arrows, [6] marked Ammon and Jerusalem, to see which will be drawn out first by one blindfolded; [7] he consults his idols; he looks at the liver of the sacrifices. [8]

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[1] Ezek. xvii. [2] **Ezek. xxi. 18-23.** [3] Lit., "make thee."

[4] Lit., "cut a hand." [5] See vol. iii. p. 251.

[6] This was a common form of divination among the heathen Arabs. Perceval, *Essai sur l'histoire des Arabes*, 1847, vol. ii. p. 310. On divination by the liver, see Lenormant, *La Divination*, p. 58.

[7] *Smend.* [8] Cic., *De Div.*, i. 16; ii. 13. *Diod.*, ii. 49.

22 In his right hand—the fortunate one—is already the arrow marked "Jerusalem" which has been drawn by him from the quiver. He orders forward the battering rams, to open a breach by breaking down the wall;[1] he commands that the loud battle cry be given; that the battering rams be set up at the gates; that an enclosing mound be raised; that a tower be built, to sweep the top of the wall. 23 To the people in Jerusalem all this seems a false prophecy; they think they will have weeks upon weeks of respite;[2] but Jehovah will call their iniquity to remembrance that they may be taken!

24 Therefore,[3] thus saith the Lord Jehovah; Because ye bring your iniquity to remembrance, so that your transgressions come to the light, and your sins, in all your conduct, appears; because ye bring them to remembrance, you will be taken by His hand! 25 And thou, wicked, falling[4] prince of Israel, Zedekiah, whose day is come—the day of thy uttermost punishment! 26 As to thee, thus saith the Lord Jehovah, "Take off his royal turban! Off with his crown!" This humbled and ruined kingdom is not the kingdom to come hereafter—that of the promised Messiah! The low shall be exalted and the high abased! 27 I will bring the city to ruins, to ruins, to ruins; what has been shall be no more, till He come whose right it is; to Him will I give it!

In the troubled time of Jehoiakim's reign the Ammonites, in common with the Moabites and Edomites, had shown their hereditary hatred of Israel, by joining flying columns of Nebuchadnezzar's troops in harassing and plundering Judah.[5] Since then, they, like others, had felt the heavy pressure of the Chaldean yoke, and, in common with the different kingdoms of Palestine, had plotted a rebellion. Envoys from their king, as we have seen, had met ambassadors from Edom, Moab, Tyre, and Sidon, at Jerusalem, to form a league against Babylon;

[1] *Schrader. De Wette.*

[2] *Ewald. Smend.* The Heb. for oath, Sheba, means also a week, and the form in the text is capable of both renderings.

[3] Ezek. xxi. 24-27.

[4] = doomed to be slain.

[5] 2 Kings xxiv. 2.

Egypt having promised to aid them. Zedekiah had, doubtless, relied on this support, especially as Ammon had compromised itself deeply by its truculent bearing towards the Great King. But Ezekiel knew how worthless this confidence would prove. Hastening to submit, on the first approach of the invader, Ammon and the other Palestine states of the south and east, would throw themselves into the contest as the allies of the Chaldeans and the exulting foes of Judah. For this they, too, would receive heavy punishment at the hand of God. Lying prophets in Ammon itself had predicted its safety when the storm should burst, and in anticipation of this it had already shown its insincerity. A short time before, the fawning ally of Judah, it now affected to treat her with scorn. Under these circumstances, Ezekiel was commissioned to denounce its king and people.

28 Thus saith the Lord Jehovah concerning the Ammonites,[1] and concerning the scorn they pour on Judah: Say thou, the sword, the sword, is drawn for the slaughter: it is whetted to the uttermost, to flash destruction! 29 Thou trustest to deceitful visions of thy prophets, and lettest lies be declared to thee, that the sword will descend only on the neck of Israel, as doomed to fall for its wickedness—Israel, whose day, thou sayest, approaches, when its sin shall receive final punishment! 30 Put thy sword back into its sheath! In your own land, whence you sprang, the land of your birth, I will judge you. 31 And I will pour out my wrath on you; I will blow on you the fire of My indignation,[2] and give you into the hand of wild men, skilled in destroying. 32 You shall become food for fire: your blood shall be poured out on the earth. You will be no more remembered, for I, Jehovah, have said it!

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[1] Ezek. xxii. 28–32.

[2] The wrath of God is conceived as breathing forth flames against His enemies.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE EVE OF THE SIEGE OF JERUSALEM.

THE guilt which was about to bring down the ruin of the Jewish State had been, as we have seen, the constant theme of Jeremiah and Ezekiel for many years; but the hope of future reformation so entirely depended on its being kept before the public mind, with all its terrible results, that no repetition seemed too frequent. It was, in fact, by this unwearied presentation of the truth, to the minds of their contemporaries, however much they disliked it, that these great preachers ultimately awakened the national conscience, and led to that amazing reaction from the idolatry of the past, of which Judaism, in its later development, became the embodiment.

Never in the history of nations, so far as appears, has a sacred order anywhere risen, so earnest, so self-sacrificing, so noble in their purity of life, so lofty in their realization of the true and eternal, so bravely faithful in their battle with sin, as the Hebrew prophets. They, in fact, believed what they said, and spoke accordingly. No fear of the great, or of the multitude, could silence them. Appointed to proclaim the whole truth, without circumlocution or mitigation, they did so, however invidious, "vulgar," "censorious," unpopular, or perilous the duty. Fashionable preachers of the day there were

in abundance; toning down the Word of God to suit their audiences; astutely careful to let abuses lie undisturbed, to flatter the great, to avoid whatever was disagreeable to their patrons, and, like keen and crafty men of the world, to make sure of as much of this life as they could, lest they should by any chance come short in the other. The fidelity of the true prophets was ill calculated to promote their worldly interests, but their names live for evermore; their self-sacrifice was the regeneration of their race, and they remain for all ages the ideal of true preachers. Does our nineteenth century realize the lesson of their example?

In the enumeration of the sins of his contemporaries, Ezekiel had laid especial stress on their idolatry; but the general corruption of the times had not escaped his lash. One sin, however, among many, had not been denounced as yet with the same fulness as others. The treatment of their banished brethren, by those who remained in Palestine, had been shameful. They had been piteously cheated and over-reached in the forced sales of their goods and property when hurried off. This was now to be laid to the charge of the extortioners. The new lords of the city, moreover, had proved as lawless as their predecessors; anarchy reigned; the streets were dangerous from the number of murders, and society was dissolving into its elements. The men who had been banished for their sins had, in fact, been better men than those left behind. A stern indictment of such a state of things was demanded.

1 The word of Jehovah—he tells us—came to him, saying: 2 Son of man,[1] if you judge the bloody city, Jerusalem, do it so as to show her all her abominations! 3 Say to her, Thus says the Lord

[1] Ezek. xxii. 1-5.

Jehovah: O city, in whose midst blood is poured out, drawing on the time of thy doom; O city, defiled by the loathsome gods she makes for herself: 4 Thou art guilty through the blood thou hast shed, and art defiled by the loathsome gods thou hast made for thyself; thou hast brought near the days of thy punishment, and hastened the years of thy retribution! Because of thy sins I will make thee the contempt of the heathen; the mockery of all lands! 5 The near and the far off will alike deride thee, and call thee "thou city of a stained name, and of restless confusion!"

6 Behold,[1] the princes of Israel, thy aristocracy, have sought, every one, to shed blood in thee to his utmost. 7 Men have despised father and mother in thee; the stranger has been treated unjustly in thy midst; the fatherless and the widow have been oppressed in thee. 8 Thou hast despised My holy things by thine idolatry. Thou hast dishonoured My Sabbaths; 9 men seeking to murder by spreading slanderous lies, are in thee. Thy people eat idol sacrifices on the mountains; lewdness is committed in thee; 10 men expose their father's shame,[2] and go near her who is legally unclean.[3] 11 One commits abomination with his neighbour's wife; another basely defiles his daughter-in-law; another humbles his sister, his father's daughter! 12 Men shed blood in thee for hire; thou takest usury and increase; thou hast overreached thy fellow-citizens, and wrung unjust gain from them by violence, and hast forgotten Me, says the Lord Jehovah!

13 Behold,[4] for this, I clap my hands together in indignation at thee, when I think of the dishonest gains thou hast made, and of the blood that has flowed in thy midst. 14 I laugh at the folly of thy sin, knowing how near is thine end! Will thy heart bear up, or thy hands keep their strength, in the days when I deal with thee! I, Jehovah, speak, and will act! 15 I will scatter thee among the heathen, and disperse thee through the lands, and destroy thy uncleanness out of thee, 16 and punish thee so that I shall seem dishonoured in the sight of the heathen, in bringing such suffering on thee,[5] and thus thou shalt know that I am Jehovah!

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[1] Ezek. xxii. 6–12. [2] Lev. xviii. 6–17; xx. 11. 1 Cor. v. 1.
[3] Lev. xii. 2; xviii. 19. [4] Ezek. xxii. 13–16.
[5] This clause may be read. "thou shalt be polluted in thyself," or, "by thine own story." But this hardly suits the context and is not so striking.

Such was the wicked city; but its day of reckoning was at hand. Its fine gold had become dim, its silver, dross; what pure ore there was must be separated from the mass of worthless alloy, and this the miseries of the siege, like the flames of a refiner's furnace, would effect!

18 Son of man,[1] said the secret Divine Voice, the House of Israel has become dross to Me.[2] They are all of them brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the smelting furnace; the dross of silver. 19 Therefore, thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Because ye have all become dross, throughout Judah, behold I will throw you into the midst of Jerusalem, as into a furnace, to purify you by the flames of the siege.[3] 20 As they cast silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the furnace, to blow fire on it and smelt it; so will I cast you into the furnace of war, and smelt you, in my anger and fury. 21 Yes! I will gather you together into Jerusalem, and blow on you with the flames of my wrath till ye be melted down in it. 22 As they smelt silver in the furnace, so shall ye be melted down in the midst of Jerusalem, and ye shall know that I, Jehovah, have poured out My fury upon you!

All ranks in Judah were hopelessly corrupt; prophets, priests, nobles, and people. Even the king did nothing to save the state. It only remained to leave it to destruction.

24 Son of man,[4] say to Judah: Thou art barren and unfruitful, like a land which has no rain or moisture in the day of wrath! 25 Her princes[5] in her midst are like[6] a roaring lion greedy for prey; they devour souls; seize property and goods; and multiply the widows in her midst! 26 Her priests violate My law and profane My holy things; they make no difference between the holy and common; they teach no distinction between clean and

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[1] Ezek. xxii. 17-22. [2] Isa. i. 22.

[3] They would flee to Jerusalem at the approach of the Chaldeans.

[4] Ezek. xxii. 23-31. [5] *Sept. Keil.* See ver. 28.

[6] The change of one letter gives this sense.

unclean, and hide their eyes from My Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them! 27 Her chief men are like greedy wolves, eager to shed blood, to destroy souls, to win gain! 28 Her prophets deceive them with mock hopes,[1] giving pretended visions and predicting lies to them, saying, "Thus says Jehovah," though He has not spoken! 29 The people of the land practise violence, and commit robbery, oppress the poor and helpless, and do illegal wrong to the stranger! 30 I sought, therefore, for one among them all that would fill in the gaps in the wall, and keep out My wrath, and that would stand in the breach before Me, by prayer and holy life, to save the land, and turn Me back from destroying it; but I found none! I will, therefore, pour out My indignation upon them; 31 I will consume them in the flames of My wrath; I will pour their doings on their own head, saith the Lord Jehovah!

Such a moral reformation as these utterances demanded was hopeless, so long as idolatry—the source of all debasement—was cherished in Judah. To restore the sincere worship of Jehovah was imperative, if a purer and better state of things were to be attained. Now, therefore, once more, at the eleventh hour, Ezekiel returned to the subject in a vivid allegory, in which Samaria and Jerusalem, the representatives of Israel and Judah, are delineated under the figure of two sisters, whose career had been shameful. The name of Aholah, the elder, showed the difference between the Ten Tribes and Judah, for it meant, "She hath her own tent," or temple, in allusion to the Northern Kingdom having framed a new religion, and repudiated, from the first, the pure faith of Jehovah. The name of the younger, Aholibah, "My tent, or temple, is in her," marked the special glory of Jerusalem. By a usage familiar in the prophets, the idolatry of the two is denounced as adultery; Jehovah being regarded as their husband. The division

[1] Lit., "daub them with white plaster."

into two kingdoms is represented as practically dating from the Egyptian bondage, though historically so much later. In a former address Ezekiel had reminded his people of the idolatry of their forefathers in the distant past;[1] he now recalls their recent history, in its relation to the heathenism of Assyria, Babylon and Egypt. To our Western ideas his sensuous imagery seems strange, but the Children of the Sun have in all ages had modes of speech very different from those of the people of colder lands.

1 The word of Jehovah[2] went forth to me again, saying: 2 Son of man, there were two women, the daughter of one mother,[3] 3 and they committed sin in Egypt; behaving shamefully even in their youth. 4 Their names were Aholah, the elder, and Aholibah, her sister, and I became their husband, and they bore sons and daughters: Aholah became Samaria, and Aholibah, Jerusalem.[4]

5 But Aholah[5]—that is, Samaria—played the harlot, although she was now Mine, and she sighed[6] after her lovers; above all, after the warrior Assyrians,[7] 6 clothed in blue or violet purple—pashas[8] and rulers,[9] all of them handsome men, in their early prime, cavaliers riding on horses. 7 And she gave herself up to sin with them—with the chosen sons of Assyria; and defiled herself with all the loathsome gods, after which she sighed. 8 Yet she did not give up her idolatries brought from Egypt,[10] for in her youth she had yielded to them. 9 For this reason I delivered her into the hand of those she loved, into the hand of the Assyrians, after

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[1] Ezek. xvi. [2] Ezek. xxiii. 1–4. [3] Sarah.

[4] They were already fallen when Jehovah took them as His.

[5] Ezek. xxiii. 5-10.

[6] Loved inordinately, looked amorously towards, made eyes to.

[7] The Hebrew word for "neighbours" is almost identical with that for "war," and this in the plural seems to give the best sense.

[8] Prefects of divisions of Satrapies.

[9] Sagans = Assyrian, Sakan. It means one "appointed" "commissioned" from the king. Schrader, *Keilinschriften*, p. 270.

[10] Exod. iii. 13; xxiii. 4. Josh. xxiv. 14. Ezek. viii. 7–10; xvi. 26; xx. 4.

whom she sighed, 10 and they dealt shamefully with her, took her sons and her daughters into captivity, and slew her, herself, with the sword, and thus she became a warning[1] to women, for the Assyrians carried out My judgment upon her.

Instead, however, of being warned by the example of the Northern Kingdom, Judah sinned still more than she. Not content with introducing Assyrian idolatry, she adopted that of the Babylonians also, and even, in the end, went after that of Egypt with more greediness than ever. Thus, the measure of her sins was at last full.

11 But though her sister Aholibah[2]—Jerusalem—saw this, she became even viler in her wickedness, and worse in her idolatries, than Aholah had been. 12 For she, too, sighed after the warrior Assyrians, pashas and rulers, gorgeously arrayed cavaliers riding on horses, all of them handsome men, in their early prime. 13 Then I saw that she, also, was defiled; that both sisters took one way; Aholibah—14 Jerusalem—even increased her sins. For when she saw pictures of men on her house walls,[3] likenesses of Chaldeans painted with vermilion, 15 with splendid girdles round their waists, and many-coloured turbans on their heads, the ends hanging down behind—all like lords to look at—the pictures of the sons of Babylon, whose birthplace is Chaldea—16 when she saw these with her eyes, she forthwith fell in love with them, and sent messengers to them, to Chaldea.[4] 17 And the sons of Babylon came to her, and they defiled her with their idolatry, and she was polluted by them. But ere long she was not contented even with them, and her mind was alienated from them. 18 She became shameless, in fact, and set on all kinds of

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[1] Lit., "a name." [2] Ezek. xxiii. 11-18.

[3] An allusion to the introduction of paintings on the walls of the mansions of Jerusalem, in imitation of the custom in Babylon. Eastern women shut up in their harems could only thus be acquainted with strangers, at first.

[4] She sent messengers to learn their religion and bring it back with them.

idolatry. Then My mind, also, was alienated from her, as it had been from her sister, Samaria.

19 Yet she still multiplied her sins,[1] bethinking herself of the days of her youth, when she had played the harlot against Me in Egypt. 20 And she drove unchaste love with the idolatries of Egypt,[2] idolatries rank as the flesh of he-asses; gods lustful as stallions. 21 Yes! thou soughtest again the sins of thy youth, committed when, of old, thou wentest after the idols of Egypt.

22 Therefore, Jerusalem,[3] thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will stir up thy lovers against thee, from whom thy mind is now alienated, and I will bring them against thee on every side, 23 the sons of Babylon and all the Chaldeans; its supreme power, its nobles, and princes,[4] and all the Assyrians with them; all handsome young men, pashas and rulers, lords, and men of name,[5] all of them cavaliers on horses. 24 They shall come against thee—not now, as lovers, but with the tumult of war chariots and clashing wheels,[6] and with an army of different nations, who will press against thee on every side, in full armour, with the large shield covering the whole body, the small target on the arm, and the helmet. And I will commit matters to them, and they will judge thee by their pitiless laws of war. 25 And I will let my jealousy come on thee, and they will deal cruelly with thee; for they will cut off thy nose and thine ears;[7] the survivors of thy manhood will fall by their sword; they will carry off your young sons and your daughters, to sell as slaves, and what men are left of thee will perish in the conflagration of the city. 26 They will also strip off thy clothes, and plunder thee of thy fine array

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[1] Ezek. xxiii. 19-21. [2] Lit., "her (Egyptian) paramours."

[3] Ezek. xxiii. 22-27.

[4] *Mühlau und Volck. Gesenius. Keil. Hengstenberg.* Pekod = "infliction of punishment." An allegorical name for Babel in Jer. l. 21. Shoa = noble, Koa = prince. *Lit.*, a "stallion or breeding camel," which must be of noble blood.

[5] Councillors, *Keil.*

[6] *Smend.* Mühlau und Volck render it, "with weapons of attack."

[7] This has always been and still is the practice in war, in the East. See *Winer*, art. *Leibesstrafen.* In Egypt, the nose of adulterers was cut off. *Diod. Sic.*, i. 78.

of ornaments. 27 Thus, if no other way, since thou refusest all warnings, I will root out thy idolatry from thee, and thy heathenism, brought from the land of Egypt, so that thou shalt not lift up thine eyes to them, or think on Egypt any more.

28 For thus saith the Lord Jehovah:[1] Behold I will give thee into the hand of those whom thou once lovedst, but now hatest: into the hand of them from whom thy mind is now alienated. 29 And they will treat thee with hatred—and take away all thy gains, and leave thee naked and bare, and the shame of thy idolatry shall be exposed; thy unfaithfulness and thy heathenism. 30 I will do this to thee because thou hast sought after the idols of the heathen, and because thou hast defiled thyself with these loathsome gods. 31 Thou hast gone in the steps of thy sister, Samaria; therefore I will give thee her cup into thy hand!

The mention of the cup of God's wrath leads the prophet to dwell on the figure.

32 Thus saith the Lord Jehovah:[2] Thou shalt drink of thy sister's cup—the cup of misery, deep and wide, which holds much, and will make thee be laughed to scorn and had in derision. 33 For thou shalt be filled with the drunkenness of grief and sorrow; with the cup of desolation and ruin; with the cup thy sister Samaria has drunk. 34 Thou wilt drink it up and drain it to the dregs; craunching up its very pieces, as a wild beast does the bones of its prey, and tearing thy bosom; for I have spoken it, saith the Lord Jehovah. 35 Therefore, thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold thou hast forgotten Me, and cast Me behind thy back; bear thou the punishment of thy unfaithfulness and idolatry!

The guilt and deserved fate of both kingdoms is now recapitulated with still greater minuteness. They have served idols; given their children to Moloch; profaned even the temple by heathenism, and gone to distant lands for new gods. Their sin must be sorely punished!

36 Jehovah said, further, to me:[3] Son of man, step forth as

[1] Ezek. xxiii. 28-31. [2] Ezek. xxiii. 32-35.
[3] Ezek. xxiii. 36-39.

accuser of Aholah[1] and Aholibah, and show them their abominations—37 that they have committed spiritual adultery; that blood is on their hands; for they have committed adultery with their loathsome gods, and have even given up their children, whom they bore to Me, as offerings to these idols, burning them! 38 Still more, they have done this: they have defiled My sanctuary, on that day when they offered up their children, and have profaned My Sabbaths. 39 For when they had slain their children, as offerings to their loathsome gods, on the same day they entered My temple, polluted as they were, and thus profaned it; lo, they practised idolatry even in the midst of My house!

40 Yes, thou sentest for men[2] to come from distant lands, despatching a messenger to them, and, lo, when they came, thou bathedst thyself for them, paintedst thine eyes,[3] and arrayed thyself with thy jewels. 41 And thou satest thyself upon a grand couch, and set out a table before them,[4] and didst put on it My incense and My oil.[5] 42 And the loud tumult of voices was hushed as they sat at it, and to the mixed crowd of these men were brought others, deep drinkers, from the wilderness,[6] and they put bracelets on the arms of the two sisters, and magnificent coronets on their heads. 43 Then said I to her that was worn out with adulteries—Aholah, the elder sister, long given to idolatry —"Will these people now commit adultery with your younger sister also, and she with them? Will she also give herself up to idolatry?"[7] 44 But they came to her also, as to a harlot; thus they came to both Aholah and Aholibah, the unchaste women!

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[1] Ezekiel here speaks against Samaria, nearly 150 years after its destruction.

[2] **Ezek. xxiii. 40–44.**

[3] In the East the eyelids are painted on the inner edges with *kohl*, a dark powder (Heb. pūk), a mixture of lead and zinc. This made the white of the eyes more striking, and seemed to increase their size.

[4] The idol altar. [5] Which should have been offered to Me.

[6] Masoretic note—Sobim = drinking men, or drunkards. Deut. xxi. 20. The men represent idols, which Jerusalem and Samaria adopted. Some of these, of wilderness tribes, may be called drunkards, from wine being offered them.

[7] The text is apparently corrupt. But this seems the meaning

45 But righteous men [1] shall judge them, as adulteresses and women that shed blood are judged,[2] because they are adulteresses, and blood is on their hands. 46 For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: I will bring a multitude against them, and give them up to ill-treatment and plunder. 47 And its host will stone them with stones, and hew them in pieces with swords; they will kill their sons and daughters, and burn their houses with fire. 48 Thus will I make idolatry [3] cease out of the land, that all nations [4] may learn not to do after their sin. 49 And they shall pay back on you your iniquity, and ye shall bear the sins of your loathsome gods, and shall know that I am Jehovah

The long-suffering patience of God was now, at length, exhausted, and no more appeals or warnings from Him disturbed the doomed capital. But the voice of the prophet was to be heard once more, though only to pronounce final sentence on his brethren, in the name of God. The day chosen for this word was ominous; the tenth month of the ninth year of Zedekiah, about the tenth of December, B.C. 591;[5] the very day on which the army of Nebuchadnezzar sat down before Jerusalem to besiege it.[6] The form of a parable, so frequent with Ezekiel, is used. The citizens had done their best to prepare for a hard siege, but they felt that, at best, they were like flesh in a cauldron, to be sodden by the fires of war.[7] Ezekiel, moreover, had told them that their own chief men had, themselves, made the city a flesh-pot, by the innocent blood shed by them in it, and that these guilty ones would on that account be given to the foe.[8] A cauldron is now again seen on a fire, and, after being filled

[1] Ezek. xxiii. 45–49.

[2] All the honourable men of a village were summoned to try an adulteress, and condemn her to death by stoning, if guilty.

[3] Lit., "lewdness." [4] Lit., "women."

[5] Smend has B.C. 587 for the fall of the city. Most say B.C. 588.

[6] 2 Kings xxv. 1. Jer. lii. 4; xxxix. 1. Zech. viii. 19.

[7] Ezek. xi. 3–7. [8] Ezek. xi. 7–11.

with the best pieces of flesh, is made to boil fiercely. But it is found to be foul with rust, and is ordered to be emptied. The population will indeed suffer intensely, but they will not all perish in their city; they will be led forth to captivity. The metaphor is in some degree mixed, as a double sense was intended. The boiling was to remove the rust, that is, the siege was to reform the people; but failing to do so, banishment must follow.

2 Son of man,[1] said Jehovah, write down the exact date of this day, for the king of Babylon has on this very day begun the siege of Jerusalem. 3 And utter a parable to the House of Disobedience, and say to them: Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Set on the cauldron, set it on, and pour water into it. 4 Put the pieces to be cooked into it, every good piece, the thigh and the shoulder; fill it up with the best bones. 5 Take only the best sheep, and lay a pile of wood under it; let it boil well, that the bones in it may be thoroughly seethed.

6 Of a truth, thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Woe to the city of blood! to the cauldron full inside with rust; the old rust of which is not cleansed out of it! Take out piece by piece; let no lot be cast to take one and leave another! 7 For blood was shed by her, in her midst. She let it flow on the naked rock, where it lies uncovered, calling for vengeance; she did not let it run on the ground, that it might be hidden by the dust. 8 To rouse fury and kindle revenge, I have let the blood shed in her be thus poured out on the naked rock, that it might not be covered!

9 Therefore,[2] thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Woe to the city of blood! I will make the pile of faggots under thee great. 10 Heap on wood, fan up the fire; make ready the flesh, boil well the broth, let the bones be burnt! 11 Then set the empty cauldron on the coals, that its brass may be hot and glowing, that its filthiness may be melted in it, that the rust may be consumed. 12 With weary toil has Jehovah laboured, but in vain; its thick rust has not been cleansed from it; let the fire burn the rust! 13 Because of thy filthy lewdness; because, though I would have made thee clean, thou wouldst not be made so, thou shalt be no

[1] Ezek. xxiv. 1-8. [2] Ezek. xxiv. 9-14.

more clean till I have poured out my wrath upon thee. 14 I, Jehovah, have spoken it; it shall come to pass; I will do it; I will not go back from it;[1] I will not spare or show pity. According to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall I[2] judge thee, saith the Lord Jehovah.

Hitherto, Ezekiel,[3] though forced to refrain from speaking in public, by the hostility of his fellow-captives, had had the unspeakable consolation of a happy home. His wife, the desire of his eyes, made sunshine to him under his humble roof, if there were clouds and darkness outside. But whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and His faithful prophet was no exception to the universal rule. The same day on which he uttered these last words over the guilty and doomed Jerusalem, the very day on which its siege, afar off, began, was memorable to him on a sadder ground. His address having closed, and his audience having left his chamber, the little heaven of his private life, hitherto so unclouded, was in a moment darkened. An intimation, communicated we know not how, that his wife was to die suddenly, chilled his soul. The light of his life was not to wane by a slow setting, but to go down at midday, leaving him without his one comforter and friend! Nor was even this all. He was told that to make this terrible sorrow a lesson to the community around, no customary sounds of loud wailing were to rise from his dwelling; he was not, like others, to mourn for the loved one by uncovering the head and strewing ashes on it;[4] or to go barefooted;[5] or to put on black sackcloth, or to cover his face to the mouth, as others did,[6] as a sign that he wished to be left

[1] Gesenius, "absolve" the guilty. [2] Sept., and all Versions.
[3] Ezek. xxiv. 15-20.
[4] Isa. lxi. 3. Lev. xxi. 10. [5] 2 Sam. xv. 30. Isa. xx. 2.
[6] Mic. iii. 7. Lev. xiii. 45. Jer. viii. 21. Job ii. 12, 13.

n silence; or even to eat the food brought on such occasions by relations and friends.[1] On the contrary, he was to put on his turban—the usual head dress of a priest;[2] to wear his sandals, and his ordinary dress; to refrain from covering his lips with his robe; to eat every-day food and not that of mourners; to bear himself, in short, as if the calamity were too overpowering to be expressed by the common symbols of grief.

He had spoken in the morning to the people who had come to him, and then, all had been well in his lowly home, but the evening fell on the pale face of his dead wife.

Yet Ezekiel, strong-minded, and nobly acquiescent in the good pleasure of Jehovah, even when it demanded most at his hands, appeared next morning, as he had been directed, without any display of the emblems of sorrow. No cries of lament rose from his desolated home; he sought no seclusion. Sympathizers, flocking to condole with him, and to pay the wonted rites to the dead, were confounded. What did he mean? He was a prophet; his action was no doubt designed. How could he thus shock public feeling?

21 Thus saith the Lord Jehovah,[3] answered the heart-broken man, Behold, I am about to profane My Sanctuary, your greatest pride and the desire of your eyes, and the delight of your soul;[4] and your sons and your daughters, whom you have left behind you in Judah, will fall by the sword. 22 But, when all this shall have happened, ye shall do as I have done, now, in my great sorrow. You will not cover your lips[5] with your mantle, nor

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[1] 2 Sam. iii. 35. Deut. xxvi. 14. Hos. ix. 4. Jer. xvi. 7.
[2] Ezek. xliv. 18. Exod. xxxix. 28.
[3] Ezek. xxiv. 21–24.
[4] Mic. iii. 11. Jer. vii. 26. Ezek. xiv. 21.
[5] Lit., "beard."

eat the bread of mourning. 23 Your turbans will be on your heads, and your sandals on your feet, as at other times; you will make no loud lamentation nor weep, but you will be overpowered by such a penalty for your sins, and shall moan to each other in speechless grief. 24 Thus, Ezekiel is a sign to you, in his present action. You yourselves will do, in that day, as he is doing now, and when this happens ye shall know that I am the Lord Jehovah!

The fall of Jerusalem had been the great event to which all Ezekiel's predictions had pointed, and would be a complete vindication of his high commission as a true prophet. His opponents would be silenced, and no further hindrance on their part, to his free speech, would be possible. The news brought by one who had escaped from the final slaughter of the storming would be the overthrow of those opposed to him, and would establish his prophetic authority.

25 Verily, O son of man,[1] on that day when I take from them the temple, which was their confidence, their supreme boast, the desire of their eyes and the delight of their souls—when I take from them, also, their sons and their daughters—26 in that day will one that has escaped, come to thee, to tell the awful tidings in thine ears. 27 Then, in that day, thy mouth, so long sealed, will be opened like that of the fugitive, and thou shalt speak as a prophet to the people, and no more be forced to keep silence, and thou wilt be seen to have been a sign to them; and they shall know that I am Jehovah!

[1] Ezek. xxiv. 25-27.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE INVESTMENT OF JERUSALEM.

WITH the twenty-fourth chapter of Ezekiel our information respecting the Hebrew captives on the Chebar ceases for a time, and we have to return to Jerusalem, now closely invested by the army of Nebuchadnezzar, drawn from many subject nations. It would seem, indeed, that contingents had been furnished, at least before the close of the siege, by Ammon, Moab, Edom and the Philistines, while the Phenicians, if they did not actively aid the Chaldeans, were bitterly hostile to Judah in feeling.[1] So little had come of the projected league of all Palestine against Nebuchadnezzar. His approach had dissolved it, and let loose all the deep-seated hatred towards the Hebrews, which had for a time been dissembled.

The investment of Jerusalem began in the early months of the ninth year of Zedekiah—about December, B.C. 591. As in similar cases, the population had been greatly increased by fugitives from the country round; but large supplies of provisions had been laid in, and the citizens trusted that Pharaoh Hophra, who had just

[1] Ezek. xxv. and xxvi.

ascended the throne of Egypt,[1] would speedily raise the siege by an army sent to their relief.

The new Pharaoh was, indeed, a man from whom much might be hoped. Fond of war and impatient of a quiet life, he was a great patron of the mercenary Greek soldiers who, under captains of their own race, hired themselves, like the free lances of the Middle Ages, to any prince willing to engage them. Hophra made Egypt more than ever their richest harvest-ground, and their bands formed the strength of his army. His father's successful campaign against Nubia showed that, since the great disaster of Carchemish, the country had regained its military spirit. Yielding to his personal ambition and the counsels of his mercenaries, he resolved to return to the policy of Necho II., and once more attempt the conquest of Syria, now held by the Babylonians. The times seemed propitious. Wearied, as we have seen, of the vassalage to the Chaldeans, all Palestine was ready to rise. In Jerusalem, especially, a strong party had forced Zedekiah into an Egyptian alliance. Trusting to Hophra, all the land was in revolt, a few months after his accession. But Nebuchadnezzar, with the swift decision that marked him, hastened from the Euphrates, by forced marches, on the first report of the rebellion; uncertain which of the petty kingdoms to attack first. To use the language of Ezekiel, the Great King stopped his chariot at the point where the two roads, to Ammon and Jerusalem, branched off, and only decided on taking the latter after consulting his oracles.[2] Jerusalem was the soul of the coalition against him. Its territory united the confederates of the coast to those of the east of Jordan and of the desert, and formed a link

[1] Lenormant says in B.C. 589. Brugsch, in B.C. 591.

[2] Ezek. xxi. 21.

between Egypt and southern Syria. One Chaldean army was sent, therefore, to ravage Phenicia and commence the blockade of Tyre, while Nebuchadnezzar himself turned, with the bulk of his troops, against Jerusalem. Not daring to oppose such a force in the open field, Zedekiah forthwith shut himself up in his capital, and the siege began. Judah had been spared twice before, but the Chaldean was now resolved to destroy it. That its king, whom he had raised to the throne, should have perjured himself, after having sworn by his own God, and that his people, though weakened by the exile of the leading spirits of the kingdom, should have proved so resolutely troublesome, determined Nebuchadnezzar to use the harshest measures. He therefore desolated the country at his leisure, delivering his captives to the cruel mercies of the Philistines and Edomites, and appeared, at last, on the north plateau of Jerusalem, only after he had laid waste the whole land with fire and sword.[1]

Under these circumstances, the credit of Jeremiah as a true prophet necessarily increased, till even the vacillating Zedekiah,—breaking loose for a moment from his counsellors,[2] and imitating the example of Hezekiah, who consulted Isaiah, the great prophet of that day, in a time of similar peril,[3]—deigned to send two of his officials, Pashur and Zephaniah, priests of high rank,[4] but of the Egyptian faction, and thus opposed to Jeremiah in politics,[5] humbly "to enquire of Jehovah," through him,

[1] Lenormant, *Hist. Ancienne de l'Orient*, p. 492. *Maspero*, p. 500.
[2] Jer. xxi. 1, 2. [3] 2 Kings xix. 2.
[4] 1 Chron. xxiv. 9. Malchiah, the father of this Pashur, was head of the fifth course; Zephaniah was the deputy high priest. He is often mentioned, and was at last slain by Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah. See Jer. xxix 25; xxxvii. 3; lii. 24. Another Pashur is mentioned in Jer. xx. 1. [5] Jer. xxxviii. 1, 4.

respecting the future.[1] The envoys found the seer in the temple; but his answer to them was dispiriting in the extreme. The king should hear the truth, however painful. Shut up in the city, without the possibility of escape, how few men would have taken their lives in their hands, by braving the anger of a despot and his court, through whom he had already suffered much. But Jeremiah knew no fear when he had to speak for God.

To the question whether the king of Babylon would be driven away from Jerusalem by a miracle, like that by which the city had been saved from Sennacherib, in the reign of Hezekiah, he forthwith replied,—

4 Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel,[2] Behold, instead of turning back the weapons of war in the hands of the Chaldeans, I will turn back those in your own hands, with which you fight on the walls against the king of Babylon and the Chaldeans, who besiege you outside, and will cause you to assemble with them, for a last struggle, in the very heart of this city. 5 I, Myself, also will fight against you, with an outstretched hand and a strong arm, with anger, and fury, and fierce wrath. 6 And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, man and beast; they shall die by a sore pestilence. 7 And afterwards, says Jehovah, I will deliver Zedekiah, the king of Judah, and his servants, the court, and the people left in this city from the pestilence the sword and the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and into the hand of their enemies, and of them that seek their life, and he will slay them with the edge of the sword: he shall not spare them, nor have pity or mercy.

He then proceeded to point out to the citizens the only means of safety.

8 As to the people, say to them,[3] Thus saith Jehovah, See, I set before you the way of life and the way of death.[4] 9 He that stays

[1] Jer. xxi. 1, 2. See the parallel cases of Hezekiah and Josiah, 2 Kings xxii. 13.

[2] Jer. xxi. 3-7. [3] Jer. xxi. 8-10. [4] Deut. xxx. 19.

n this city shall die by the sword, the famine, and the pestilence. But he that goes out and gives himself up to the Chaldeans that esiege you, he shall live; his soul shall be his share of the booty, o carry off. 10 For I have set My face against this city, for evil nd not for good, says Jehovah; it shall be given into the hand of he king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.

## Then followed a warning to the royal family.

11 And as to the House of the king of Judah,[1] hear the word of ehovah: 12 O House of David—king and royal family together—hus saith Jehovah, Do your duty as your forefathers did,[2] by itting in the gate of the city every morning, to do justice, as the idges of the people, and to snatch the man that is being plundered rom the hand of his oppressor; that My fury may not burst out gainst you like fire, and burn unquenchably, because of the evil f your doings!

## Jerusalem, as a whole, has roused the anger of God.

13 Behold, I am against thee,[3] O Jerusalem, inhabitress of the alley beneath the temple, and of the table-land rock[4] beyond,[5] aith Jehovah—who says to herself—"who shall come down from he neighbouring heights against us? Who shall enter our secure etreats?" 14 But I will punish you according to the fruit of your loings, saith Jehovah; and I will kindle a fire in the forest-like lwellings of your city, and it will devour everything round it.[6]

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[1] Jer. xxi. 11, 12. [2] 2 Sam. xv. 2–4. [3] Jer. xxi. 13, 14.

[4] Lit., "the rock of the Mishor." Mishor is the name for the mooth upland downs of Moab (Deut iii. 10; Josh. xiii. 17; xx. 8; er. xlviii. 8, 21). Derived from the root *yashar*, "even, level, lain," it naturally came to be used figuratively for equity, right, ighteous, and uprightness (Mal. ii. 6; Isa. xi. 4; Ps. xlv. 7; lxvii. ; cxliii. 10), and thus the name was equivalent to "the rock of ustice, righteousness, or equity"—a name in which the people rided themselves.

[5] Zion and the rest of the city is beneath surrounding hills, and s called table-land,

[6] The word used for "forest" is *yaar* (see vol. iv. p. 358). Porions of this are even now constantly set on fire by the charcoal urners, who thus often burn down a whole hillside. *Neil*, p. 206.

Then followed a final command to take a message to the king personally.

1 Thus saith Jehovah,[1] Go down from this temple hill to the palace of the king of Judah, and speak this word there, 2 and say, Hear the word of Jehovah, O king of Judah, that sittest on the throne of David—thou, and thy servants, and thy people that enter into this temple by these gates: 3 Thus saith Jehovah, Execute justice and righteousness, as supreme judge of the state, and snatch the man that is being plundered from the hand of the oppressor; and do not yourself oppress or do violence to the stranger, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place! 4 For if you really act thus, kings sitting on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, shall pass through the gates of the palace—they and their servants and their people. 5 But if you will not hear these words, I swear by Myself, says Jehovah, that this house, the temple, shall become a desolation!

6 For thus saith Jehovah,[2] to the House of the king of Judah: Thy lofty cedar palaces, crowning Mount Zion—though fair and proud as the trees on the hills of Gilead, or on the top of Lebanon—will be made a desolation, like cities that are depopulated and deserted. 7 I will set apart destroyers against thee, every one with his weapon, and they will cut down thy best cedars, and throw them on the fire. 8 And many peoples will pass by this city, and say each to the other, "Why has Jehovah done thus to this great city?" 9 And they will answer, "Because they forsook the covenant of Jehovah, their God, and worshipped and served foreign gods!"

The sins of the kings had been too surely one of the causes of the ruin of his country to permit Jeremiah to spare the throne in his preaching. Yet the glorious anticipation of the advent of a true Messianic king lighted up the future; and while he felt compelled sternly to denounce the rulers of his own and of past days, he

[1] Jer. xxii. 1-5.

[2] Jer. xxii. 6-9. The rest of the chapter is given at vol. iv. pp. 380-2. It is apparently of an earlier date than these verses.

was too true a patriot, and too zealous for the final triumph of the kingdom of God, to keep back this cheering prospect.

1 Woe to the shepherds[1]—cried he about this time—who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture! saith Jehovah. 2 Therefore, thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, respecting the shepherds that feed My people: Ye have scattered and driven away My flock, leading them into idolatry, and bringing exile upon them, and have not visited them for good, or cared for them. Behold, I will visit on you the evil of your doings, saith Jehovah. 3 But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries, whither I have driven them, and bring them back again to their pastures, and they shall be fruitful and increase. 4 And I will set up shepherds over them who shall feed them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor be lost, saith Jehovah!

A singularly distinct prophecy of the Messiah follows.

5 Behold the days come,[2] saith Jehovah, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, who will rule as King, and act wisely, and execute justice and righteousness in the land. 6 In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel dwell in security, and this is the name by which He shall be called—"Jehovah our Righteousness."[3] 7 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that they shall no more say, "By the life of Jehovah, who brought up the

[1] Kings. Jer. xxiii. 1-4. [2] Jer. xxiii. 5-8.

[3] Bishop Thirlwall proposes that this be read, "Jehovah *is* our Righteousness," from the analogy of Jehovah Shammah = Jehovah *is* there (Ezek. xlviii. 35. See *Thirlwall's Remains*, vol. iii. p. 471). It would then imply that in the times of the Messiah, Jehovah would be the righteousness of Jerusalem, bestowing righteousness and all its blessings on her people. Keil, De Wette, Naegelsbach, pronounce for the name as in the A. V. Ewald, Arnheim, Streane, Hitzig, for the other rendering. The Jews understand the name as referring to the Messiah. *Barclay's Talmud*, p. 38. To my own mind there is no doubt that the A.V. is right, since the Messiah, not Jehovah in His invisible personality, is the great theme of prophetic hope.

sons of Israel from Egypt," 8 but "By the life of Jehovah, who brought up and led the seed of the House of Israel from the land of the North, and from all lands whither I have driven them," and they shall dwell in their own land.

Next to the false kings, the false prophets had been the main cause of the ruin of the country. These, therefore, Jeremiah fitly passes on to denounce.

9 My heart within me is broken,[1] all my bones shake[2] for terror; I am like one drunk, like a man overpowered by wine, before Jehovah and His holy words. 10 For the land is full of adulterers; yea, the land withers under a curse; the pastures of the wilderness dry up, for the conduct[3] of the people is evil; they are strong, not to do right, but to do wrong! 11 For both prophet and priest are unholy. Even in My own house, the temple, have I found their wickedness, saith Jehovah.[4] 12 Therefore, their way will be slippery to them in the darkness[5] that is coming; they shall be driven on and fall in it. For I will bring evil upon them, the year of their punishment, says Jehovah. 13 I saw folly[6] among the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in the name of Baal, and led My people Israel astray. 14 But I have seen among the prophets of Jerusalem a horrible thing; they commit adultery,[7] and walk in lies, and strengthen the hands of evil doers, so that no one turns from his evil way; all the people of Jerusalem are become to Me as Sodom, all its inhabitants like those of Gomorrah!

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[1] Jer. xxiii. 9-14.

[2] Lit., "are loose, or weak."

[3] Course.

[4] Since prophets are mentioned along with priests as being in the temple, Dr. R. Smith assumes that "the official prophets were part of the establishment of the temple," and because Jeremiah was put in the stocks, he adds, "they were subject to priestly discipline." Yet not only prophets, but people frequented the temple, and punishments were not restricted to any class. An offender of any kind was exposed to the tender mercies of the temple police. See *Bible in the Jewish Church*, p. 286.

[5] *Land and Book*, p. 78.

[6] The word means "tasteless, unsalted," hence "irrational."

[7] Idolatry.

15 Therefore, thus saith Jehovah of Hosts[1] concerning the prophets: Behold, I will feed them with wormwood and give them poison-water to drink,[2] for, from the prophets of Jerusalem, pollution has gone out through the whole land. 16 Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts: Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They deceive you; they speak a vision of their own inventing;[3] not out of the mouth of Jehovah. 17 They say continually to them that despise Me: "Jehovah has said, Ye shall have peace," and to every one who walks in the imagination of his own heart they say: "No evil shall come upon you." 18 But who of them has stood in the counsel of Jehovah, to see and hear His Word? Who of them has marked and heard My Word?

19 Behold a whirlwind of Jehovah,[4] a storm of wrath, is gone forth, a rolling hurricane; it shall whirl round the head of the wicked. 20 The wrath of Jehovah will not turn back till He has carried out and performed the thoughts of His heart. At the end of the days ye will understand it perfectly. 21 I have not sent their prophets, yet they ran; I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied! 22 But if they had stood in My counsel, they would make known to the people My words, and bring them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.

## The impossibility of false prophets escaping detection and punishment is evident.

23 Am I a God only over what is near at hand,[5] saith Jehovah, and not, also, a God who sees and reigns afar off? 24 Can any one hide himself in secret places, so that I shall not see him? saith Jehovah. Do I not fill heaven and earth? says Jehovah. 25 I have heard what the prophets say, who prophesy lies in My name, saying, "I have dreamed, I have dreamed." 26 How long will it be in the hearts of the prophets to prophesy lies, and to be prophets of falsehood of their own invention?[6] 27 They think they will make My people forget My name, through their dreams,[7]

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[1] Jer. xxiii. 15–18.
[2] See vol. v. pp. 205, 208. See also Jer. chap. viii. 14.
[3] Lit., "heart."
[4] Jer. xxiii. 19–22.
[5] Jer. xxiii. 23–29.
[6] Heart.
[7] There were true prophetic dreams, sent from Jehovah.

which they tell each to the other, as their fathers forgot My name for Baal. 28 Let the prophet who really has a dream from Me, tell it; let him who has received a word from Me, speak it faithfully. These dreams of the false prophets are as different from true revelations from Me as straw is from corn, saith Jehovah! 29 Is not My word like a fire that consumes all such deceptions, and like a hammer that breaks in pieces all who utter them?[1]

30 Therefore, I am even now coming down[2] in wrath upon the prophets, saith Jehovah, that steal My word one from the other. 31 Behold, I am even now coming down in wrath on the prophets, saith Jehovah, who use their tongues, and, without authority from Me, repeat the phrase of true prophets.[3] 32 Thus saith Jehovah: Behold I am even now coming down in wrath on them that prophesy lying dreams, saith Jehovah, and repeat them, and lead astray My people by their lies and by their boasting of communications from Me. Yet I did *not* send or commission them, and they are no good whatever to this people, saith Jehovah.

33 And if this people, or one of these false prophets, or base priests, ask you: "What burden[4] have you received from Jehovah

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Num. xii. 6. 1 Sam. xxviii. 6. 1 Kings iii. 5. Job iv. 13; vii. 14; xxxiii. 15. Joel ii. 28. The dreams meant here, are pretended dreams, published as sent from Jehovah or from idols, and interpreted by heathen methods. In this case the pretending dreamer and interpreter were to be stoned. Deut. xiii. 2–12. See Lenormant, *La Divination*, p. 147.

[1] *Eichhorn.* "Let the prophet who has a dream tell it as a dream; and let him who has My word repeat it exactly. What has straw to do among corn? says Jehovah. Does not My word burn like fire? Does it not break in pieces the heart as the iron hammer does the rocks?"

[2] **Jer. xxiii. 30–40.**

[3] It is striking to notice how the bitter divisions of the day united the most opposite parties against the old national faith. The aristocracy found themselves supported in their heathen and Egyptian bias by the bulk of the priests and even of the prophets, who as an order were the natural antagonists of the moribund priesthood.

[4] The Hebrew word is *Massa.* For its meaning, see vol. v. p. 429, also *Neil*, p. 25.

to-day?" say to them: "What burden have I received to-day?" This: "I will cast you off (as an intolerable burden)," says Jehovah![1] 34 And the prophet, the priest, and the people who talk lightly of "The burden of Jehovah," I will punish that man and his house. 35 Ye shall speak thus, each, to his neighbour, and each to his brother: "What has Jehovah answered? and what has Jehovah said?" 36 But ye shall no more use the phrase, "Burden of Jehovah," for it shall itself be a burden of guilt to every man who uses it, for ye misuse and pervert the words of the living God, Jehovah of Hosts, our God, of which this phrase is one. 37 You shall say also to the prophet, "What has Jehovah answered thee? and what has Jehovah said?" 38 But if you speak of "The burden of Jehovah," thus saith Jehovah: Because you use this phrase, "The burden of Jehovah," in ridicule of His true prophets, and I have sent to you, saying, "You shall not say, 'The burden of Jehovah,'" 39 I, even I, will take you up as My burden, and cast both you and the city which I gave to you and your fathers, far from My sight, 40 and bring everlasting shame on you, and perpetual undying contempt.

The message sent to the king closes with a parabolic vision, like that seen by the prophet Amos[2] The date at which it was first spoken is stated to have been some time after Nebuchadnezzar had carried off King Jehoiachin and the chief men of the nation, with the carpenters, smiths and other artisans of Jerusalem, as prisoners, to Babylon. The population left in the city fancied they had been spared as better than those so heavily punished; but Jeremiah tells them that the very reverse was the fact. He saw in spirit, two baskets of figs set before the temple;[3] one specially good, like the delicate June fruit which anticipated the harvest in August;[4] the other

[1] Or, "Ye are the burden, saith Jehovah." This reading is obtained from another division of the words in the Hebrew, without any change of letters.

[2] Amos viii. 1–3. [3] Jer. xxiv. 1-3.

[4] Isa. xxviii. 4. Hos. ix. 10. Mic. vii. 1. Nah. iii. 12.

so bad as to be uneatable [1]—and he recognised in the two a striking picture of the true condition of the kingdom. On the one side, the young king, full of promise, had been led off into captivity with the noblest, bravest, and most useful men of the city. The hope of the future rested on these. On the other hand, there was the weak vassal-king Zedekiah, with the feeble and corrupt remnant of the population left behind; untaught by the terrible lesson of the fall of their brethren, and unteachable. Some of the choicest spirits of the nation were now on the banks of the Chebar—such as Daniel, his three companions, and the prophet Ezekiel—and they would kindle a better life in their fellow-captives. But in Jerusalem there was no such prospect of spiritual revival. The word of Jehovah, that accompanied the vision, ran as follows:—

5 Thus saith Jehovah,[2] the God of Israel: As one looks with pleasure on good fruit, and guards and preserves it, so will I look for their good upon the captives of Judah, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans. 6 For I will set My eye on them for their good, and will bring them back again to this land, and I will build them up and not destroy them; I will plant them and not pluck them up. 7 And I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am Jehovah; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart.

8 And[3] as men throw away bad, uneatable figs, verily, so, says Jehovah, will I treat Zedekiah, the king of Judah, and his princes, and the remnant of Jerusalem, and those that remain in this land, and also those dwelling in the land of Egypt. 9 I will make them an object of shuddering pity, and give them up to calamity in all kingdoms of the earth; and will make them a contempt, a

[1] The bad figs may have been those of the sycamore, which contain a bitter juice, or they may have been decayed or rotten. Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 399.

[2] Jer. xxiv. 4–7. [3] Jer. xxiv. 8–10.

byword. a mockery and the butt of cursing, in all places whither I drive them. 10 And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence upon them, till they are wholly consumed from off the land that I gave to them and to their fathers.

The moral corruption and social anarchy of Jerusalem must have been extreme, to call forth such denunciations from one of its own citizens; a man not censorious or cynical, but full of tender loyalty to his fellow-countrymen. But amidst all this evil there were still some of "the poor" and "meek" of the land, who clung to the religion of their fathers, and yearned for the revival of faith in Jehovah and obedience to His law. With them, among the remnant in Judah, lay the future of the Church of God. They were the true Israel, and, as such, Jehovah was mindful of His covenant with their fathers. To sustain them amidst the gloom, around and before them, an assurance of the certain realization of the Divine promises was only what might be expected from the gracious God whom they so faithfully served. Jeremiah, as the centre of this feeble evangelical brotherhood, felt his warmest sympathies drawn out towards them, and gladly turned aside from his terrible condemnations, to announce the future salvation prepared by God for His true people, after they had been purified by exile. The whole chosen race, so far as it returned to its allegiance to Jehovah, would, one day, be restored. They would come back to their own land, and a new spiritual covenant, written, not on tables of stone, but on their hearts, would be made with them, and they would forget their past misery. Jeremiah was, therefore, commanded to write in a book "all the words" which Jehovah thus condescended to communicate for the comfort of His hidden ones; "For, lo,"[1] He said, "the days come that

[1] Jer. xxx. 1-3.

I will bring back again the captivity of My people Israel, and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it."

The consolation thus graciously vouchsafed, is thrown, in its introductory sentences, into a dramatic form,[1] for greater effect. A future generation is pictured as hearing, from afar, the bitter cry of the exiles, amidst the judgments on the heathen around them, and Jehovah is introduced as ministering words of cheer to them, by a promise of their future deliverance.

5 (*The people*) We hear the cry of terror and dismay, and, as yet, there is no deliverance! (*The prophet*) 6 Ask and see. A man cannot bear a child; why then such wails, like those of a woman in trouble? Why do I see every man with his hands on his loins, like a woman in her pain, and all faces turned pale? 7 (*Exiles*) Alas, for that day of Jehovah, often predicted! The day of His judgments, is great; it is a time of distress to Jacob. (*Jehovah*) But he shall be saved from it.

The great theme of the discourse—the deliverance from exile—now begins.

8 In that day,[2] says Jehovah, I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon from off thy neck, O Israel, and burst asunder thy bonds, and aliens shall no longer make thee their servant. 9 But Israel shall be the servant of Jehovah, his God, and of David, his king, whom I will raise up to him.[3]

10 Therefore, fear thou not,[4] O My servant Jacob, saith Jehovah, and be not dismayed, O Israel; for, lo, I will save thee from the

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[1] Jer. xxx. 4–7. [2] Jer. xxx. 8, 9.

[3] The Messiah is spoken of as David in other passages. See Ezek. xxxiv. 23; xxxvii. 24. Hos. iii. 5. From this, and similar passages, the Rabbis invented a doctrine of a double Messiah—temporal and spiritual. Buxtorff, *Lex.*, p. 1273. *Oehler*, in *Herzog*, vol. ix. p. 440. But see Hengstenberg's *Christol.*, 2te Auf. p. 471.

[4] Jer. xxx. 10-14.

r distant land of thy exile, and thy children from the land of
ptivity, and Jacob shall return, and rest in peace, no one dis-
rbing him. 11 For I am with thee, says Jehovah, to save thee;
r I shall make an utter end of the nations among which I have
attered thee, but I will not make a full end of thee; yet I will
nastise thee according to justice, for I cannot leave thee un-
nished. 12 For, thus saith Jehovah, thy wound is past healing;
e blow that has struck thee is desperate. 13 No one cares for
y state; thou hast no medicines for thy sore, to press it to-
ether or bind it, or any plaster. 14 All thy lovers, with whom
ou sinnedst, have forgotten thee; they do not ask after thee;
r I have struck thee down with the blow of an enemy, with
tter chastisement, for the multitude of thy transgressions—for
y sins were many.

### Judah and Jerusalem are now specially addressed.

15 Why criest thou out for thy sufferings?[1] Because thy
nishment is terrible? I have done these things to thee for the
ultitude of thy transgressions, for thy sins were many. 16 But,
ecause I have pity upon thee, therefore all that devour thee shall
emselves be devoured; all thy oppressors, every one of them,
all go into captivity; they that plundered thee shall themselves
e spoiled, and all who have robbed thee will I give as a prey
robbers. 17 And I will lay a healing plaster on thy wound, and
eal thee of the blows thou hast received, saith Jehovah, because
ey call thee an "Outcast,"—"Zion, whom no man asks after."

### Jerusalem shall be in favour with God, and shall prosper.

18 Thus saith Jehovah,[2] Behold, I will turn again the captivity
the tents of Jacob, and have mercy on his dwelling-places, and
erusalem shall be rebuilt on its own hill,[3] and the palace be

[1] Jer. xxx. 15-17. [2] Jer. xxx. 18-22.

[3] The word in the Heb. for "hill" is *Tel*. It often forms part
the name of a city, as in Telassar, Thelassar (2 Kings xix. 12;
a. xxxvii. 12), Tel Haresha = Tel Harsa, and Tel Melah (Ezra ii.
; Neh. vii. 61), Tel Abib (Ezek. iii. 15). Most eastern cities
ere built on eminences, to protect them from inundation and
gainst the foe.

inhabited by a king in royal state.[1] 19 And out of the tents of Jacob and the chambers of the city shall rise thanksgiving, and the voice of them that rejoice, and I will multiply them, and they shall not be diminished, and I will bring them to honour, and they shall no longer be lightly regarded. 20 Their sons shall flourish as in times of old, and their community[2] be firmly established, and I will punish all that would oppress them. 21 And their king will come forth from their own race, their ruler from the midst of themselves; they will no more serve the foreigner: and I will bring him near and allow him freely to approach Me, even in the Holy of Holies, to plead for you—a boldness of access permitted to no one else.[3] For who is he who would risk his life by approaching Me? 22 Thus will you be My people, and I will be your God.

The wicked, however, will be consumed in the flames of God's wrath.

23 Behold there comes a tempest from Jehovah,[4] a bursting forth of wrath; a sweeping hurricane will whirl round the heads of the wicked. 24 The fierce indignation of Jehovah will not turn aside till he has finished and carried out the thought of His heart. At the end of days ye will understand this!

This storm of wrath against the enemies of Israel will at once prove God to be the God of His people, and will bring about the deliverance and reassembling of all its twelve tribes as one nation.

1 At the same time, says Jehovah,[5] will I be the God of all the twelve tribes of Israel, and they shall be My people. 2 Thus saith Jehovah, The remnant of the nation which has escaped from the sword has found grace in the wilderness. Israel is now coming

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[1] Lit., "after its manner."

[2] Congregation.

[3] A promise of the greatness and glory of the Messiah. Not even David had such a privilege. None but the high priest, and he only once a year, could enter the Holy of Holies; but the Messiah, being the very Son of God, and Himself Divine, had freedom of approach to the Father at all times.

[4] Jer. xxx. 23, 24. [5] Jer. xxxi. 1-6.

to its rest![1] 3 It now says in its penitence, "Jehovah appeared from afar—from Zion—unto me." Let Me therefore tell its sons, I have indeed loved thee, Israel, with an everlasting love, therefore have I continued My lovingkindness to thee. 4 I will further build thee up again, and thou shalt remain prosperous,[2] O Virgin of Israel. Thou shalt again ornament thy timbrels,[3] and go forth in the dances of them that make merry. 5 Thou shalt yet plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria, and they that plant them shall gather their fruit. 6 For the day is coming when the watchmen on the mountains of Ephraim shall announce the new moons that proclaim the approach of the great yearly feasts, and shall call out—"Up! let us go up to Mount Zion, to Jehovah, our God!"

7 For thus saith Jehovah:[4] Sing for gladness about Jacob! Sing songs of jubilee about her that was the chief of the nations![5] Sing aloud, and cry to God, "Jehovah, save Thy people! the remnant of Israel!" 8 [Then will come His gracious answer]: Behold, I bring them from the land of the North, and gather them from the farthest sides of the earth—the blind and the lame, as well as the strong; the woman with child, and she that is about to bring forth, together. A great community are they as they return! 9 They will come with weeping and with supplications, as I lead them. I will guide them to streams of water, by a smooth path, on which they will not stumble, for I will be a Father to Israel, and Ephraim shall be my firstborn.

10 Hear the word of Jehovah,[6] O ye nations, and tell it to the farthest coasts and islands, and say: "He that scattered Israel will gather him, and will guard him as a shepherd doth his flock." 11 For Jehovah has redeemed Jacob,[7] and ransomed him from the

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[1] Ewald refers this to the favour shown Israel after its escape from Egypt. Others think it is spoken of the remnant of the tribes who have survived the Assyrian captivity. But Babylon, or Assyria, was a wilderness to the fancy of the Jew, compared with his own land. The explanations of the last clause are numerous. I have given what seems to me the best translation.

[2] Heb., "built."

[3] Heb., *toph*; Arab., *duff*, or *diff*; our tambourine. See "timbrel" and "tabret," in *Concordance*.

[4] Jer. xxxi. 7-9.

[5] Amos vi. 1. Ezek. xix. 5.

[6] Jer. xxxi. 10-14.

[7] The Ten Tribes.

hand that was stronger than he, 12 and they will come and sing on the height of Zion, and stream to the blessings of Jehovah, which He shall give them in the fatherland—to the wheat, and to the wine, and to the oil, and to the young sheep and oxen; and their soul shall be as a garden rich in waters, and they shall not droop or pine away any more. 13 Then shall the virgin enjoy herself in the dance;[1] young men and old will rejoice together; and I will turn their mourning into joy, and comfort them, and make them glad, after their sorrow. 14 And I will satiate[2] the priests with fatness,[3] and My people will be satisfied with My bounty, saith Jehovah.

An exquisite passage now comes, in which the long dead Rachel, the mother of Joseph, and thus the ancestress of the great tribe of Ephraim, the representative of the Ten Tribes, is seen risen from the grave and lamenting their loss, at Ramah, the lofty hill on the boundary between the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, whence she could look afar over the now desolate home of her northern children. But Jehovah Himself comforts her as she weeps. Let Israel repent of his sins, and he will surely return.

15 Thus saith Jehovah:[4] A voice is heard in Ramah,[5] loud cries of sorrow and bitter weeping. Rachel weeps over her children and refuses to be comforted, because they are not.

But Jehovah appears to console and cheer her.

16 Refrain thy voice from weeping[6] and thine eyes from tears,

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[1] The maidens danced by themselves.

[2] Lit., "water or refresh."

[3] The number of the finest beasts offered as sacrifices will be very numerous, so that the share of the priests and their families—the wave breast and heave shoulder (Lev. vii. 31-34)—will more than supply them.

[4] Jer. xxxi. 15.

[5] Now Er Ram, five English miles N. of Jerusalem. It is on the top of a detached hill commanding a wide view to the north.

[6] Jer. xxxi. 16-17.

ays the All-merciful; for thou shalt still have a reward of thy
notherly sorrow and care—thou guide of the youth of Joseph—
hou who gavest thy life to give Benjamin his—thou who didst
o yearn for children—thy sons shall come back again from the
and of the enemy. 17 There is hope for thy future, saith
Jehovah; thy sons shall return to their own borders!

Repentance is needed on the part of Israel, to secure
ts deliverance from captivity; but this is not wanting.

18 I have assuredly heard Ephraim lamenting his sins:[1] "Thou
hast chastised me," said he. "I received correction like an ox
unbroken; turn me, that I may turn, for Thou, Jehovah, art my
God. 19 For after I had turned away from Thee I repented; and
after I came to my right mind I smote on my thigh, for grief at
my sin; I blush and am ashamed that I should bear such reproach
for the guilt of my youth."

At this confession of sin by Ephraim, the old love of
Jehovah for him rekindles.

20 Is Ephraim, then,[2] a dear son to me? Is he a son I de-
ighted to caress? For, often as I spoke against him, I still
thought of him fondly. Therefore, my heart sighs for him; I
will surely have mercy on him, saith Jehovah.

Preparations for his safe return across the wilderness,
from Assyria to Palestine, are therefore to be made.

21 Set up stones to mark the way;[3] raise heaps of stones to
point it out: turn thy thoughts to the road thou hast to take:
the same road by which thou wast led into captivity: return, O
Virgin of Israel, return to these thy towns! 22 How long wilt
thou hesitate to take the right way, O backsliding daughter? For
Jehovah has created a new thing in the earth; it is the part of
a man—the stronger—to protect and care for the woman; but
thou, the woman—the bride of Jehovah—wilt be allowed to pro-
tect Me, by protecting My temple, My worship, and My honour.[4]

[1] Jer. xxxi. 18, 19. [2] Jer. xxxi. 20. [3] Jer. xxxi. 21, 22.
[4] See on this explanation, Keil, *Jeremiah*, pp. 331-2. A great variety of opinions may be read in Rosenmüller, *Scholia, ad loc.* "To compass" = to cherish and protect.

Judah, also, shall be restored from captivity.

23 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts,[1] the God of Israel: They shall again use this speech in the land of Judah, and in its towns, when I bring back their captivity: "Jehovah bless thee, O habitation of righteousness; thou holy mount!"[2] 24 And therein will all Judah dwell, with all the population of its towns; some as husbandmen, some going forth with flocks. 25 For I will refresh the weary soul, and satisfy him that languishes.

The prophet had seen and heard all this while in a sleep-like trance,[3] but the joy it gave him broke the spell, and he now awakes and sees things around, as one restored to his normal state. No wonder that he adds, "My sleep was sweet unto me." But, ere long, his thoughts fell back to the same train, and the happy future of Judah and Israel, as a nation once more united, rose in vision before him.

27 Behold, the days come[4] (said the heavenly Voice), when I will sow the House of Israel, and the House of Judah, as if they were a fruitful field, with the seed of man and with the seed of cattle. 28 And as I have been wakeful over them, to pluck up and root out, to destroy, and consume, and harm, so will I be wakeful over them to build and to plant, saith Jehovah.

There will, then, be no longer the disposition to blame the sins of the fathers and overlook their own, as the cause of all they have suffered in exile.

29 In those days they will no longer say, as ye do constantly now, "The fathers ate sour grapes and the teeth of the sons are set on edge."[5] 30 But every one shall die only for his own sins; every man who eats sour grapes, *his* teeth, only, shall be set on edge.

A community thus realizing the responsibility of its members for their spiritual condition and acts, would

[1] Jer. xxxi. 23-25.
[2] The land of Judah.
[3] Jer. xxxi. 26.
[4] Jer. xxxi. 27-30.
[5] Ezek. xviii. 2. See page 21.

necessarily be actuated by a higher motive than the mere wish to honour God by outward service. Grateful for His restoring them to their own land, obedience to Him would be a willing homage of love. A New Covenant, written, not like the former, on tables of stone, but on the "fleshy tables of the heart," would, therefore, be made with them by Jehovah.

31 Behold, the days come,[1] saith Jehovah, when I shall make a new Covenant with the House of Israel, and with the House of Judah; 32 not like the Covenant I made with their fathers, on the day when I took them by the hand, to lead them out from the land of Egypt, which, My Covenant, they have broken, though I had become their husband,[2] saith Jehovah.

33 But this is the Covenant[3] that I will make with the House of Israel, after those days, saith Jehovah; I will put[4] my law[5] in their inmost parts, and write it on their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 And they will no longer need to teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, "Know Jehovah"; for they shall all know Me, from the least to the greatest, saith Jehovah; and I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.[6]

The covenant made at Sinai, written on stone, had been instituted amidst every circumstance of awe, and hence, fear, rather than love, had been associated with its observance. But the New Covenant of the Messianic times, written on the heart, would rest on love; and holy love is, like the soul, immortal. The moral nature

[1] Jer. xxxi. 31, 32.

[2] The word in the Heb. means to become their "Lord," or husband." It is used in the same sense in Gen. xx. 3; Deut. xi. 13, xxii. 22, xxiv. 1; Isa. lxii. 4, 5, liv. 1, 5; Jer. iii. 14; Mal. ii. 11. In 1 Chron. iv. 22, and Isa. xxvi. 13, it is rendered to have dominion over."

[3] Jer. xxxi. 33, 34. [4] Lit., "give." [5] Torah.

[6] Gratitude for sin forgiven will lead them to seek to know Jehovah, and will keep them faithful to Him.

would, in fact, be renewed, as of old the world had been from chaos, and the laws of the new spiritual creation would prove as permanent and unchanging as those of the material universe.

35 Thus saith Jehovah,[1] who appointed the sun for light by day; the ordinance of the moon and stars for light by night; who throws the sea into a commotion so that its waves roar; Jehovah of Hosts is His name: 36 If *these* ordinances fail from before Me,

Ancient Sepulchres in the Valley of Hinnom.

saith Jehovah, so also will the seed of Israel cease to be a nation, before Me, for ever! 37 Thus saith Jehovah: If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth beneath be searched out, I will also reject all the seed of Israel, notwithstanding all that they have done, saith Jehovah.

Jerusalem would be rebuilt and flourish in those days.

[1] Jer. xxxi. 35-37.

38 Behold the days come,[1] saith Jehovah, that the city Jerusalem will be rebuilt for Jehovah, from the Tower of Hananeel[2] to the gate of the corner.[3] 39 And the measuring line will go still farther, straight forward, over the hill Gareb,[4] and bend towards Goath.[5] 40 And the whole of Benhinnom, the valley of corpses[6] and ashes,[7] defiled now as the scene of the horrors of Moloch worship,[8] and all the space east to the Valley of Kidron, to the corner where the Horse Gate is, at the south-east angle of the wall, will be holy to Jehovah, and shall no more be rooted up or destroyed for ever!

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[1] Jer. xxxi. 38-40.

[2] At the north-east of the city wall. Neh. iii. 1. Zech. xiv. 10.

[3] At the north-west corner of the town; north or north-west of the present Jaffa Gate. 2 Kings xiv. 13. 2 Chron. xxvi. 9. Zech. xiv. 10.

[4] Gareb = the place of the lepers. An unknown height on the west of the city.

[5] An unknown spot on the south-west of the city. The restored Jerusalem would include spaces lying outside the old city. It is called in the Talmud "The heifer's pool."

[6] Carcases of criminals and of animals were thrown out in the Valley of Hinnom.

[7] Part of the valley was set apart for the mingled ashes and fat of the sacrifices, to consume which an "unquenchable fire" was kept always burning.

[8] 2 Kings xxiii. 10.

## CHAPTER V.

### DURING THE SIEGE.

JEREMIAH was fortunate enough to preserve his liberty for some time after the siege had begun, but it was in danger from day to day. Nebuchadnezzar's army, including, besides Chaldeans, contingents from every land subject to him,[1] had full possession of the country outside the gates of Jerusalem, and were besieging not only Jerusalem, but also, at the same time, Lachish and Azekah, fortified towns belonging to Judah, on the Philistine plain.[2] The stubborn tenacity of the capital, however, remained unbroken, and its hope that Egypt would send a force to relieve it was unshaken. Amidst such excitement, to run counter to the popular feeling was dangerous in the extreme, and would have been made an excuse for silence by ordinary men. But Jeremiah knew that resistance was vain, and lost no opportunity of proclaiming this, even to the king in person. Zedekiah had already consulted him, as we have seen, as to the future; but this did not content the prophet. Seizing opportunities of meeting him, either by penetrating to his chambers in the palace, or when he came abroad, Jeremiah sought, again and again, to warn him of the madness of further resistance.

[1] Jer. xxxiv. 1. [2] Jer. xxxiv. 1, 7.

"Thus saith Jehovah," said he, on one occasion when he had made his way into the royal presence.[1]

2 Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, that he may burn it with fire. 3 And thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but shalt surely be taken, and delivered into his hand; and thine eyes shall see the eyes of the king of Babylon and thy mouth will speak with his mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon.[2] 4 Yet, hear the word of Jehovah, O Zedekiah, thou king of Judah. Thus says Jehovah respecting thee, Thou shalt not die by the sword. 5 Thou shalt die in peace, and they will burn spices at thy burial,[3] as they did at the burial of thy fathers, and they will raise over thee the usual lament, "Ah, lord!"—for I have spoken the word, says Jehovah.

ASSYRIAN FUNERAL URNS FOR THE ASHES OF THE DEAD.
*From Gosse's Assyria.*

One of the forms of oppression against which Jeremiah and other prophets constantly declaimed, was the retention of free-born Hebrews of both sexes, in slavery, contrary to the law. It was illegal to hold any one as a household slave for more than six years, though field slaves, under special circumstances, might be kept as such till the year of Jubilee.[4] Both classes, however, were to be treated as kindly as if they were hired servants.[5] But the rich men of Jerusalem ignored these provisions of the law,

[1] Jer. xxxiv. 2–7.

[2] Jer. lii. 11; xxxii. 4. Ezek. xii. 13.

[3] It was usual with other nations to burn aromatic perfumes at the burial or burning of great persons. Pliny, *Hist. Nat.*, xii. 18. The Assyrians seem to have in some cases burned the bodies of the dead, but the Hebrews buried them.

[4] Exod. xxi. 2. Deut. xv. 12. [5] Jer. xxv. 39–55.

and held numbers of household servants in perpetual slavery. The imminent danger of the city now, however, for the moment, roused the conscience of the king in favour of these helpless victims. Jeremiah's words had sunk into his heart, and he resolved to take one step, at least, in the right direction, by setting all the Hebrew slaves in Jerusalem free, apparently without regard to the length of time they had served. The need of all possible help in the defence may, perhaps, have been, in part, a consideration, and also, the prudent wish to avert disaffection among the oppressed, when hearty union was so imperative. Amidst the terrors of the siege, therefore, a great assembly of the citizens was held in the temple,[1] and acquiescence in a decree of emancipation wrung from all slaveholders; their formal assent to this reform being solemnly confirmed by a covenant ratified by the usual sacrifices.[2] The decree of enfranchisement was then published, and, even amidst the perils of the hour, the great act of justice spread a momentary gladness through all bosoms.[3]

But reforms carried in a paroxysm of excitement are apt to be short lived. News reached the Chaldeans, very soon after, that an Egyptian army, destined for the relief of Jerusalem, had invaded the south of Palestine,[4] thus creating a danger to the besiegers which forced them to abandon the investment of the city for a time, and march against the new foe. To lead a large force down the steep and narrow defiles, from the table land to the coast plains, was no easy matter, and secured for the capital a respite of at least two or three months. Hopes forthwith ran high among the citizens, that the disappearance of their assailants was final; the victory of Pharaoh Hophra

[1] Jer. xxxiv. 15.
[2] Jer. xxxiv. 18.
[3] Jer. xxxiv. 8-10.
[4] Jer. xxxvii. 5.

being confidently assumed. But he was soon driven back to Egypt; if, indeed, as some accounts say, he did not retire at once without fighting, on the approach of the Chaldeans.

The interval of fancied security was ruinous to Jerusalem. The slaves so lately set at liberty were once more seized, and deprived of their brief freedom.[1] Violence reigned as cruelly as in the worst days of the past. The wildest agitation prevailed. Even a semblance of order could only be maintained by the clubs and spears of the retainers of the slave-holding lords. Jerusalem was rent by the bitterest of all feuds, the struggle of a despairing proletariat for its personal liberty. Amidst this fierce uproar and commotion, the voice of Jeremiah, fearless, as always, in defence of the rights of the poor against the injustice of the rich and privileged classes, was heard denouncing the oppressor, and sympathizing with the downtrodden.

13 Thus saith Jehovah,[2] the God of Israel,—cried the noble tribune of the people,—I made a Covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the House of Slaves, saying: 14 At the end of seven years,[3] ye shall set free, every man, his brother Hebrew, who has sold himself to thee; he shall serve thee six years, and then thou shalt let him go free. But your fathers hearkened not to Me, neither inclined their ear. 15 Ye, however, changing this recently, did what was right in My sight; proclaiming liberty,

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[1] Jer. xxxiv. 11. [2] Jer. xxxiv. 12-16.

[3] At the end of *six years*. The first and last dates were both reckoned by the Hebrews. Thus the Jubilee was, strictly speaking, the 49th year, not the 50th. So also Circumcision, which was said to be on the eighth day, was, by our way of reckoning, on the seventh; and our Lord's Resurrection, which by the Jewish counting was to take place on the third day, was by ours to be on the second.

every man, to his neighbour; and made a Covenant to this effect before Me, in the House which is called by My name. 16 But ye have now changed again, and have polluted My name, and have taken back every one his man slave and every one his woman slave, whom he had set free of his own will, and have forced them once more into bondage.

17 Therefore, thus saith Jehovah,[1] since ye have not hearkened to Me, by keeping true to your proclamation of liberty to your brothers and neighbours; behold, I now proclaim liberty to you, saith Jehovah; liberty to the sword, the pestilence, and the famine, to ravage you; and I give you up to be a shuddering to all the kingdoms of the earth! 18 And I will make the men who have broken my Covenant given of old, and have not kept this present one which they but as yesterday swore before Me, like the calf which they cut in two, and between the pieces of which they passed,[2] when these Covenants were made. 19 The princes of Judah and of Jerusalem, the courtiers and the priests, and all the people of the land, who passed between the pieces of the calf, 20 I will give into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those who seek their life, and their dead bodies shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven and for the beasts of the earth. 21 And Zedekiah, the king of Judah, and his princes, will I give into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of the army of the king of Babylon, which has for the time withdrawn from Jerusalem. 22 Behold, I will command, saith Jehovah, and bring them back to this city, to fight against it, and take it, and burn it with fire; and I will make the towns of Judah a desolation, without an inhabitant!

The relief enjoyed by the temporary retirement of the Chaldeans from the siege, however misleading to others as to the final issue of the struggle, did not for a moment change the fixed convictions of Jeremiah. Divinely illuminated, he knew that Egypt would be defeated and ultimately crushed by Nebuchadnezzar, and this he sought to get his fellow-citizens to believe, that they might save at least their lives and the town, by timely submission to the Chaldeans.

[1] Jer. xxxiv. 17-22. [2] Gen. xv. 10.

The word of Jehovah, he announced, had come to him, saying:

14 Declare ye in Egypt, publish it in Migdol,[1] make it known
in Noph and Tahpanhes![2] Say: Stand forth and prepare thyself,
for the sword has devoured the nations round about you. 15 Why
is thy Mighty One overthrown?[3] He could not stand, for
Jehovah has cast him down. 16 He causes many to fall; yea, one
falls on the other; the bands of the mercenary troops say: "Up!
let us return to our own people, to the land of our birth, from the
exterminating sword." 17 They call Pharaoh,[4] the king of Egypt,

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[1] Jer. xlvi. 13–19.

[2] Migdol, or Magdolon (a military "watch tower"), was twelve miles from Pelusium, or Avaris, the north-east frontier town of Egypt. It lay S.W. from Avaris on the only road. Tahpanhes (see vol. v. p. 146), lay eight or ten miles farther to the S.E., on the same road. Noph, contracted from Menoph, is Memphis, the ancient capital of Lower Egypt. Its ruins lie south of the present Cairo, on the west bank of the Nile. See vol. ii. pp. 13–16. See also Brugsch's *Map*.

[3] The adjective translated in the A. V. "valiant" is plural, but the verb and the pronouns in the clause are singular. It has hence been thought that the adjective, also, should be singular; the only change needed to make it so being the omission of the letter Yod, the smallest in the Hebrew alphabet, which may have been inserted by a copyist to suit the plural verb, etc. The Septuagint, treating it as singular, refers it to the sacred ox Khaph—Apis or Hapi—the supreme god of Memphis, translating the phrase, "Why has Apis, thy chosen one, fled?" But other towns besides Memphis are named, and Apis was worshipped in Memphis alone. He was indeed "The Mighty One" of that city; just as Jehovah was "The Mighty One of Israel." The plural of the adjective, it may be added, is used of strong oxen, but the singular never stands for an ox. On the whole, the singular seems likely to be correct, and may be applied either to the king of Egypt or to the god Apis, as is thought best by the reader. Ewald translates the passage "Thy Ox is carried off."

[4] The Sept., Syriac and Vulgate, by the change of the vowel in the Hebrew, read "the name of" for "these."

"a ruined man"; for he has let his season of grace pass away! 18 As I live, says the King, whose name is Jehovah of Hosts: Verily, as a Tabor among the mountains and a Carmel on the Sea, will the invading destroyer come.[1] 19 Make ready thy packing, in preparation for being carried off captive, ye citizens of Egypt; for Noph shall be waste and desolate, without an inhabitant.

20 Egypt[2] is like a wondrously fair heifer, but a deadly gadfly[4] comes out of the north to destroy her! 21 Her foreign hired troops also, in her midst, men like fatted bullocks, even *they* turn their backs and flee together, and will not face the foe; for the day of their destruction has come on them; the time of their punishment. 22 The voice of Egypt, bowed and humbled to the dust, is like the rustle of a serpent gliding off in alarm through the fallen leaves of a wood; for her enemies march against her in strength, and come with axes against her, like men that hew down trees; 23 and they will hew down her forest,[5] saith Jehovah, for their number is countless, they are more than the locusts, they are innumerable. 24 The daughter of Egypt is put to shame, she is given into the hand of the people of the North. 25 Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will visit Amon, the god of No—that is, Thebes[6]—and Pharaoh, and Egypt; its gods and its kings; the Pharaoh and those who trust in him; 26 and I will give them into the hand of their deadly foe, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, and into the hand of his servants. Yet, afterwards, it will flourish[7] as in the days of old, saith Jehovah.

27 But fear not thou, O my servant Jacob,[8] and be not dismayed O Israel! For, behold, I will deliver thee from the far-off land,

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[1] His awful might will rise high over that of all around him, as Tabor and Carmel above the landscape at their feet. Tabor is 1,805 feet above the sea level, 1,350 feet above the plain below. Carmel sinks into the Mediterranean in a steep cliff more than 500 feet in height. *Robinson.*

[2] Lit., "daughter." [3] Jer. xlvi. 20-26.

[4] *Mühlau und Volck.* Gesenius, *Supp. to Thes.*, p. 111. Ewald translates it "a monster." Graf and others, as in the text.

[5] Jer. xxi. 14. Isa. x. 18, 33. [6] See vol. ii. p. 14.

[7] Lit. "be inhabited." [8] Jer. xlvi. 27, 28.

and thy seed from the land of its captivity, and Jacob shall return, and be at rest and secure, no one disturbing him. 28 Fear not thou, O Jacob, My servant, says Jehovah; for I am with thee; for I will make an utter end of all the nations whither I have driven thee, but I will not make an utter end of thee, but only chasten thee according to right, and not leave thee unpunished.

Intercourse between Jerusalem and the exiles on the Chebar was still swift and constant in these years, and false hopes of the triumph of Egypt, cherished among them as much as in Palestine, needed no less to be discouraged. Hence, on the twelfth day of Tebet,[1] nearly our January, in the year 588, Ezekiel addressed his fellow-captives in words very similar to those of Jeremiah in the far-off capital.

1 The word of Jehovah has come to me[2] (cried he), saying: 2 Set thy face against Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and prophesy against him and against all Egypt. 3 Speak, and say: Thus says the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I come against thee, O Pharaoh, king of Egypt, thou great crocodile, lying in the midst of the canals of the Nile, who hast said, "My Nile stream is my own; I made it what it is for myself, by canals, dams, sluices, and reservoirs." 4 But I will put a ring in thy jaws, and will make the fish of thy streams—that is, the people of thy land—cleave to thy scales, and I will drag thee up out of the midst of thy canals, and all the fish in them will stick to thy scales. 5 And I will throw thee out in to the desert, thee and all the fish of thy canals; thou wilt fall on the open ground; thou shalt not be lifted up nor buried; for I give thee for meat to the beasts of the earth and the fowls of heaven. 6 And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am Jehovah, because they are a staff of brittle reed to the House of Israel. 7 When its sons take hold of thee with the hand thou snappest across, and tearest off their whole shoulder; when they lean on thee thou breakest so that their whole body shakes.

8 Therefore, thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I bring on

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[1] Lit., in the 10th moon; the 12th day of the moon.

[2] Ezek. xxix. 1-12

thee, O Egypt, the sword, and destroy from thee man and beast. 9 And the land of Egypt will be made waste and desert, and they shall know that I am Jehovah.

Because Pharaoh has said, "The Nile stream is mine, and I have made it," 10 behold, for this, I am against thee, and against thy canals, and I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste and desert, from Migdol on the farthest north-east, to Syene on the farthest south, that is, to the borders of Ethiopia. No foot of man or of cattle will pass through it, nor will it be inhabited for forty years. 11 And I will make the land of Egypt a desolation above all desolate lands, and her towns will be a desolation above all desolate towns for forty years; and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them through the lands.

13 Yet,[1] thus says the Lord Jehovah: At the end of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the peoples whither they were scattered. 14 And I will bring back the captives of Egypt, and will restore them to the land of Pathros,[2] the land of their birth, and there they shall be a weak kingdom. 15 It will be the weakest of kingdoms, nor will it exalt itself any more above the nations; for I will make them weak, that they may no more rule over the nations. 16 And Egypt will no longer be the trust of the House of Israel, bringing their sin in remembrance before God by their thus turning away from Him to look to them. And they shall know that I am the Lord Jehovah.

Three months later,[3] when the siege of Jerusalem was near the end of its fifteenth month,[4] perhaps after the receipt, from Palestine, of news that Pharaoh's attempted relief had been defeated, Ezekiel once more addressed the exiles on the engrossing subject of the prospects of future help to Judah from the Nile. The word of Jehovah, he tells us, came to him saying,—

21 Son of man! I have broken the arm of Pharaoh, king of

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[1] Ezek. xxix. 13–16.

[2] Egypt. Petores = South-country, Upper Egypt; the Thebais of the Greeks and Romans.

[3] Ezek. xxx. 20–26.

[4] See date in Ezek. xxiv. 1, 2; comp. with that in Ezek. xxx. 20.

Egypt, and, lo, it has not yet been set,[1] so that salves might be applied to it, or a bandage wrapped round it, to make it strong to hold the sword again. 22 Therefore, thus says the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will come to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and break both his arms—the strong one and that which has already been broken—and will cause the sword to fall out of his hand. 23 And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them through the countries.[2] 24 And I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and put My sword into his hand, and will break the arms of Pharaoh, so that he shall groan before him like a deadly wounded man. 25 I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and the arms of Pharaoh shall fall down; and they shall know that I am Jehovah, when I give My sword into the hand of the king of Babylon, that he may stretch it out against the land of Egypt. 26 And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them through the countries; and they shall know that I am Jehovah.

The excitement in Babylonia as the siege of Jerusalem drew near its termination, must have been intense, and the increasing certainty that it would result in the utter destruction of the Jewish State, as the prophets had foretold, must have intensified the public feeling against Egypt, as the temptress that had led it to its ruin. It is not, therefore, matter of surprise that Ezekiel turned again to the subject,[3] in the very last days of the Holy City, and denounced the Pharaoh afresh. Most of this utterance, however, has already been given,[4] and need not be repeated. The glory of Assyria had been like that of the grandest cedar of Lebanon, exciting the envy of all the trees, even of Eden. Yet it had fallen. Egypt, therefore, which had no such lordliness of which to boast, could not hope to escape God's judgments. The Pharaoh

[1] Lit., "bound."

[2] This was done to the vast crowds of prisoners taken by Nebuchadnezzar.

[3] Ezek. xxxi. 1-18.

[4] See vol. v. p. 332.

also would be cast down to the trees of Eden—the great ones of Assyria—in the Underworld; he would lie in the midst of the uncircumcised—that is, the godless heathen—who had been slain with the sword. This, adds Ezekiel, is the fate of Pharaoh and all his multitude: so says the Lord Jehovah.

The raising of the siege, as has been said, had filled the citizens with new hopes of ultimate deliverance, for men cling to their cherished dreams in the face of every improbability. All classes trusted that the storm had passed over, and that the predictions of Jeremiah would remain unfulfilled. Even religious feeling, in a dull and imperfect way, was revived. Jehovah, the national God, must be consulted. His prophet must be asked to intercede with Him for the city. He would perhaps hear so faithful a servant. Two dignitaries therefore, Jehucal or Jucal,[1] apparently one of the princes of Judah, but a bitter enemy of Jeremiah, even to the length of wishing to kill him,[2] and Zephaniah, the Sagan or second priest, who, as commandant of the temple, had been appealed to from Babylon to punish the prophet,[3] and had once before been sent to him by Zedekiah,[4] waited on the seer, as a new deputation from the palace, to ask him, in the name of the king, to pray for his fellow-citizens.

But, as might have been anticipated, the mission was a failure. Intercession with God was not to be bought either by threats or cajoling. Humble repentance on the part of the king and his people alone could secure it, and this was wanting. Incorruptible amidst a degenerate community, the prophet answered the king's messengers as the spokesman of a higher than their master.

[1] Jer. xxxviii. 1.
[2] Jer. xxxviii. 4.
[3] Jer. xxix. 25, 26.
[4] Jer. xxi. 1.

7 Thus saith Jehovah[1] the God of Israel (said he to them): Speak thus to the king of Judah, that sent you to enquire of Me. Behold, the army of Pharaoh which has marched to relieve you, shall return to Egypt, their own land. 8 And the Chaldeans will come back, and fight against this city and take it, and burn it with fire.

9 Thus saith Jehovah:[2] Do not deceive yourselves, thinking that the Chaldeans are finally gone, for they will not go. 10 For if ye should smite the whole army of the Chaldeans which fights against you, and only some wounded men remained of them, even these would stand up, every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire.

With this dismal message, the courtiers were forced to be contented, but it roused to the uttermost their hostility to the prophet, and speedily led to active measures against him. Availing himself of the temporary withdrawal of the besieging army,[3] he had resolved to go out to his native village, Anathoth, about four miles to the north,[4] apparently to secure his share of the tithes and produce of the Levitical glebe of the village, due to him as one of its priests; the distribution being made, it would seem, in public, at stated times.[5] Knowing that the Chaldeans would return, it was imperative that he should obtain the means of subsistence, to take back into the city, so soon to be beleaguered afresh.[6] A pretext

[1] Jer. xxxvii. 6–8. [2] Jer. xxxvii. 9–11. [3] Jer. xxxvii. 11–15.

[4] *Dict. of the Bible.*

[5] "In the midst of the people," A.V.

[6] This is the best explanation of this verse (Jer. xxxvii. 12). Some think he went to claim a portion of land, but this seems a matter not likely to trouble him at such a time. The words translated "to separate himself," lit. mean "to take his portion." Hitzig thinks it was a Sabbath year, during which nothing had been sown, and that Jeremiah went out to claim his strip of ground by seeing that the boundary stones were right, before the soil was broken up for a new crop. The prophet's answer is lit., "It is a lie! I am not deserting," etc.

for violence towards one so unpopular was eagerly wished, and this supplied it. No sooner, therefore, did he reach the gate on the north of the city, known as that of Benjamin or Ephraim,[1] from leading to the territory of these tribes, than the officer in charge of it arrested him, as intending to desert to the Chaldeans—though these were now away on their march against Pharaoh Hophra. In vain did Jeremiah repudiate this accusation with Oriental bluntness, though it was ridiculous on its very face: he was led off at once to the princes or privy council. These, unfortunately, were no longer the same as had befriended him so warmly under Jehoiakim.[2] *They* had probably been carried off to Babylon with Jeconiah.[3] From the present officials, whom he had compared to rotten figs,[4] he could expect no favour. Glad to see their enemy caught at last, they broke out into a storm of rage when he appeared, and summarily ordered him to receive forty strokes save one, of the stick,[5] a terrible punishment, and then to be thrust into an underground dungeon in the house of one of their number, Jonathan the scribe, perhaps their secretary.

How long the prophet lay in this "house of the pit," or underground "vault,"[6] is not known. It is probable that the house with which it was connected stood in the temple precincts, or near the palace on its south side. If so, one of the countless hidden arches, by which the

[1] Jer. xxxviii. 7. Zech. xiv. 10. 2 Kings xiv. 13. Neh. viii. 16.
[2] Jer. xxvi. 16; xxxvi. 19.
[3] Jer. xxiv. 1; xxix. 2. [4] Jer. xxiv.
[5] The text says "smote him." Forty stripes were the legal maximum of a public scourging (Deut. xxv. 3). But only thirty-nine were given, for fear of exceeding the lawful number.
[6] Jer. xxxvii. 16–21.

surface was raised to a level along the rough sides of Mount Moriah, may have been his prison; for the whole of the plateau of both temple and palace is honeycombed with a series of vaults and cisterns, one of the former extending 150 feet from north to south.[1] But wherever the dungeon was, the sufferings of the prophet were intense from cold or neglect, or both; so intense, indeed, that he felt himself sinking under them.[2] It must have been with no common delight therefore that, at last, he received an order brought to him from the king, to come secretly to the palace, and cheer the monarch's despair, if he possibly could, by some words of comfort from Jehovah. Virtually powerless in the hands of his court, the phantom ruler dared not consult him openly. Weak and irresolute, he could not brave its anger by acting, even in so small a matter, as became his office. Most men, after such an imprisonment, would have been glad to give as favourable an answer as they could. But no personal consideration weighed with the prophet. Brought face to face, in some private chamber, with the man who held his life or death in his hands, he calmly told him: "There *is* a word from Jehovah, for He has said, Thou, Zedekiah, shalt be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon." Then, seizing the opportunity of being in the presence, he went on, "In what have I sinned against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that thou shouldst put me in prison? Where are thy prophets who told thee that the king of Babylon would not come against thee, or against this land? Bring them hither that they may justify their lying predictions? Therefore since I, not they, have pro-

[1] Captain Warren. *Recovery of Jerusalem*, p. 17.

[2] Jer. xxxvii. 20.

phesied truly, hear me, my lord king, and let my entreaty before thee, I pray thee, be granted; and do not send me back to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there." Coming at such a time, when the awful dignity of his office surrounded the petitioner, this request could not be refused. Orders were, therefore, issued to transfer him from the dungeon he so much feared, to the court of the guard at the palace, and to give him a piece of bread each day, from the Baker's Street,[1] as long as any was left in the city. Fear of the nobles, and perhaps of the people, might prevent his being set free, but his detention should henceforth be at least less painful than hitherto.

The comparative liberty of the prophet brought him, however, into fresh danger.[2] Chained, it may be, to the wall of the court, he had free intercourse with the soldiers and people,[3] and as nothing would induce him to keep silent as to the issue of the siege, his words spread far and near. That their enemy should thus be more influential than ever, infuriated the nobles of the council.[4] It was reported to some of them, among others to Jucal, who had recently visited the prophet from the king, and Pashur,[5] the son of Malchiah, who had been

[1] The bread was made in round pieces, about eight inches across, and an inch thick, and three of these were required for a meal (Luke xi. 5). One was, therefore, barely enough to support life (1 Sam. ii. 36). Public bakers are mentioned in Hosea vii. 4, 6. As with other trades in the East, bakers lived in one street in Jerusalem. We read of the "Tower of the Ovens," Neh. iii. 11; xii. 38 (furnaces A.V.).

[2] Jer. xxxviii. 1-3.

[3] Jer. xxxviii. 1, 32; viii. 12.

[4] Jer. xxxviii. 1.

[5] Jucal and Pashur were confidential officers of the king. Jer. xxi. 1; xxxvii. 3. Of Shephatiah we know nothing. Gedaliah was perhaps a son of that Pashur who put Jeremiah in the stocks. Jer. xx. 1, 2.

one of the first deputation to him from Zedekiah,[1] that he had said, "Thus saith Jehovah, He who remains in this town will die by the sword, the famine, and the pestilence; but he that goes out to the Chaldeans shall live; he will have his life for his share of the spoil, and shall not die. Thus saith Jehovah, This town shall, assuredly, be given into the hand of the army of the king of Babylon, and will be taken by them."

The resolution of the council was speedily formed.[2] Going to the king, they demanded that the prophet should be put to death, since his words were dispiriting the fighting men left in the town, and the people at large. He was a traitor, they maintained, seeking the hurt of the city. Zedekiah might have reminded them that no blame could attach to the prophet, since he only repeated words put in his mouth by God Himself; words which he was bound to deliver. But to play the man was beyond him. Cowed by their bearing, he at once gave way, telling them that Jeremiah was in their hands, since they ruled, not he. Thus authorized, they ordered their victim to be seized forthwith and put into the underground rain-cistern of Malchiah, a member of the royal family, in the court of the guard, where he then was. Tying cords round him, therefore, he was let down, through the funnel-shaped mouth,[3] into this hideous dungeon. Fortunately, there was no water in it; but the bottom was covered with deep mud, into which the prophet sank. It was clear that his life was to be taken, with every aggravation of previous misery; for the cold and wet must soon have killed him, had not help been at hand.

Among the officials[4] of the palace was a eunuch from the

[1] Jer. xxi. 1.
[2] Jer. xxxviii. 5, 6.
[3] See vol. i. p. 449; vol. iii. p. 303.
[4] Jer. xxxviii. 7–13.

heart of Africa,[1] apparently the keeper of the royal harem, whose title only—Ebed Melech, "the king's slave," —has been preserved. News of the prophet's treatment having reached him, he hurried to Zedekiah, who, at the moment, was engaged on some public duty in the vacant space inside the North or Benjamin Gate, and told him what had happened, boldly denouncing it, and adding that the sufferer would die of hunger in the cistern, since there was now no more bread in the town. "Take thirty men with you," replied the king, with unwonted decision, "to guard you in the task, and get him out of the cistern before he die." As quickly as possible the kindly eunuch was at the mouth of the loathsome prison, to cheer the prophet by announcing his deliverance. Ropes passed down, with rags to put under the armpits, to prevent the strain from chafing them, soon did the rest, and Jeremiah once more saw the light and took his old place in the court of the guard. The spasmodic vigour of Zedekiah in this incident was touching. The want of moral courage alone, had, apparently, brought him into all his trouble. Baulked and overridden by the Egyptian party, he had wanted strength of mind to turn against them and free himself. He had submitted to break his oath to Nebuchadnezzar, and make an alliance with Egypt, against his own convictions, and he could not act decisively even now, though his life was in the balance. Jeremiah saw his position exactly. A mere puppet in the hands of his council, he had only to flee to the Chaldean camp, and tell the truth, and it would be recognised, to his personal acquittal. The guilt of the revolt would at once be shifted to the right shoulders, those of the imperious Egyptian faction, who now in effect reigned. Zedekiah, unlike them, respected Jeremiah

[1] Negro eunuchs are still very common in the East.

as a true prophet, and was not without reverence towards Jehovah. But he had no force of character. Eager to consult the prophet, he had not courage to act on his advice when given. A proof of this was soon shown.[1]

With a town now reduced to famine and even cannibalism,[2] and decimated by the plague; the houses full of the sick and wounded; bloody fights between contending parties, as to surrendering or holding out, crowding the streets with fresh horrors; the roar of the siege night and day filling the air; Zedekiah was fain once more to seek the prophet as one whom he held to be in special relations to Jehovah. But he could only venture to see him privately.[3] A covered passage leading from the palace to the temple[4] afforded the opportunity, and thither, where no one could witness the interview, the prophet was brought. Stout-hearted in words, Zedekiah, now while no one saw or heard, would have nothing hidden from him. Jeremiah might speak out fearlessly the whole truth. But the terrors of the recent past, and his knowledge of the king's fickleness and effeminacy, had made him also cautious. "If I tell you all that God has said, will you not kill me?" replied he. "And is it not the case, that even if I do counsel you, you will not hear me?" But Zedekiah, in mortal anxiety, was ready to give any assurances. He swore, "by the life of Jehovah, who created our life in us," that he would neither himself kill him, nor deliver him up to the men who sought his life. Thus assured, Jeremiah repeated what he had so often said, that if Zedekiah gave himself up to the Chaldeans, he would save his life, and that of his house, and Jerusalem would not be burned; while, if he did not,

[1] Jer. xxxviii. 14-19. [2] Lam. iv. 10. [3] Jer. xxxvii. 17.

[4] The "third entry" (Jer. xxxviii. 14) seems to have been such a passage.

the city would be destroyed and he himself would fall into the hands of the enemy. He took care, however, not to say that the "princes" who had stirred up the revolt would in any case escape.

But the "I will and I will not" of moral weakness held the doomed man like a spell.[1] He was afraid, he said, that the Chaldeans would hand him over to the Jewish deserters in their camp, and that these would maltreat him. "They will not deliver you up to them," replied Jeremiah. "Obey, I beseech you, the voice of Jehovah, which I speak to you, and it will be well with you, and your soul will live. But if you refuse to go out of Jerusalem and give yourself up to the Chaldeans —this is the word that Jehovah has revealed to me. Behold, all the women of the harem that are left in your palace — wives, concubines, and attendants — shall be brought out as prisoners to the generals[2] of the king of Babylon, and they will mock your weakness, singing—

"'Your friends, O king Zedekiah,—the court party—have led you astray
And have made a puppet of you:[3]

Your feet sank in the slough into which they had led you,
And now, instead of helping you, they draw back,
And leave you to get out as you best can.'

"Thus[4] they will bring out all your wives and your children to the Chaldeans, and you, yourself, will not escape out of their hands; you will be captured by the king of Babylon, and your refusal to obey God's voice will cause this city to be burned with fire."

The fate of the weakling hung in the balance,[5] but his irresolution and cowardice weighed down the scale

[1] Jer. xxxviii. 19-22. [2] Princes. [3] Overpowered you.
[4] Jer. xxxviii. 23. [5] Jer. xxxviii. 24-28.

against him. Fear of the tyrannical oligarchy unmanned him. They must on no account know that he had spoken to the prophet; nothing that had been said between the two must be repeated. He had, moreover, the meanness to draw back from his oath, so far as to say that it would be kept only if perfect secrecy were maintained, and he even stooped to ask Jeremiah to equivocate. Should the princes, hearing of the interview, threaten him with death if he did not tell what had passed at it, he was to answer, that he had asked not to be sent back to the prison in Jonathan's house. No doubt this favour had been requested, else Jeremiah would not have said so, yet it was by no means the whole truth. But Jeremiah felt himself free to act on the king's recommendation. He was not bound to tell his mortal enemies everything, and he did not do so. When, therefore, they came, he had the adroitness to put them off with this answer, and was left without further annoyance, a prisoner in the court of the guard, till the city was taken.

While these events were passing, the Chaldean army had returned and recommenced the siege; Pharaoh Hophra having been driven back.[1] But though the prophet knew that the city must fall, he abated nothing of his calm assurance that it would hereafter rise from its ashes, and that Judah would once more flourish. He felt that his race was the chosen people of God, and that the promise of the Messiah implied such a restoration. The expected golden age might, indeed, be long delayed, but Jehovah had promised it, and that was enough.

An opportunity for showing this confidence, so well-fitted to cheer true followers of the ancient religion,

[1] Jer. xxxii. 1-5

strangely offered itself while the immediate prospects of the State were sinking to the lowest.

A cousin of Jeremiah, Hanameel,[1] son of Shallum, the prophet's uncle, a priest like himself, had a plot of ground in the neighbourhood of Anathoth,[2] which he wished to sell. Jewish law, however, prohibited free sale, and required that ground in the market should be offered to the next of kin, that it might still remain in the family.[3] The lands strictly belonging to the tribe of Levi could not be sold, as they were held in common,[4] but Hananeel may have inherited this piece through his mother,[5] and having no children,[6] may thus have been free to dispose of it, like Barnabas the Levite, in later times.[7]

Jeremiah being the next heir, and as such holding also the right of redemption in the Jubilee year,[8] had the ground from any cause been sold to a third party, Hanameel naturally came to him, to offer him the option of purchase. We do not know why he wished to sell, but the darkness of the times was reason enough. His proposal was at once recognised by the prophet as in accordance with a Divine pre-intimation received beforehand, and a bargain was forthwith struck. The price was small according to our notions—only seventeen shekels[9]—about two guineas—but the peculiarities of

[1] Jer. xxxii. 6–15.

[2] It must have been within 2,000 cubits of the village. Num. xxxv. 5.

[3] Lev. xxv. 24, 25; Ruth iv. 6. Keil, *Bib. Archæol.*, p. 208.

[4] Lev. xxv. 34. See Grotii, *Annot. on Jos.*, 24, 33.

[5] Num. xxvi. 8.

[6] This is implied.

[7] Acts iv. 37.

[8] Lev. xxv. 23–28.

[9] In the margin the Heb. is correctly translated "seven shekels and ten pieces of silver," a form of expression which has led to the idea that the seven shekels were *golden*. This, however, is a

the Jewish land laws, and possibly the pressure of the times, may have affected its value. Two copies of a deed were duly written, and witnesses having been called, the money was weighed out in the scales, as is still the custom in the East. One deed having been left open for reference, and the other carefully sealed up, both were handed to Baruch, the constant friend of the prophet, before Hanameel and the witnesses who had signed the documents, and of all the Jews who sat as prisoners in the court of the guard, with the request that they should be put into an earthen vessel for preservation, for "houses and lands and vineyards shall one day be again bought in the land." Jehovah had said it. The whole transaction was striking, at such a time. We extol the patriotism of the Roman, who bought at its full price the land on which Hannibal's camp was pitched, outside the gates of Rome,[1] but it was even nobler, in the son of a feeble race like the Jews, to buy a field at the moment in the hands of a mighty power like Babylon, knowing, as he did, that before the purchase could be of value, his people must expiate their sins by captivity for two generations in a far distant land.

That he should have acted thus derives an additional moral grandeur, as an act of passive obedience to Divine command, in the face of overwhelming perplexity as to the possible realization of the hopes it implied. Jeremiah knew that Jerusalem would hereafter rise from its ashes,

mere conjecture. We do not know the size of the piece of ground, which may have been very small, and it is to be remembered that the purchase was, in reality, only that of its crops, till the next year of Jubilee, which may have been not far off. Besides, silver was very much more valuable then than now. Araunah's floor was bought for 50 shekels. 2 Sam. xxiv. 24.

[1] *Liv.*, xxvi. 11. *Florus*, ii. 6.

and Judah again be peopled, because God had said it; but to reconcile this with the further knowledge that the city, and even the temple, would, within a short time, be burned to the ground, and the population of the whole land be carried off to Babylon, was beyond his powers. Under such circumstances he betook himself, as godly men have done in all ages, to Him who alone could make darkness light. Prayer, to him, as to us, was the natural language of the earthly child to his Heavenly Father.

When, therefore, he had delivered to Baruch the two title-deeds, he sought relief to his soul in its difficulties by asking light from God.[1] Bowing low, it may be before all, in the court of the guard, fettered as he was, he breathed out to Jehovah the deep cry of his heart; speaking, we may fancy, like Hannah, in his soul only; the lips moving, but no audible words escaping them.

17 O Thou, Lord Jehovah![2] Behold, Thou hast made heaven and earth by Thy great power and Thine outstretched arm; nothing is too hard for Thee! 18 Thou showest loving kindness to thousands, and payest back the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them:[3] 19 Thou great and mighty God, Jehovah of Hosts is Thy name. Great in counsel, and mighty in deeds; whose eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men, to give every one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings! 20 Thou didst signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, and doest them even to this day, both in Israel and to men at large, and hast made Thyself, even now, a name! 21 And Thou leddest forth Thy people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and wonders, and a strong hand, and a stretched out arm, and with great terror to their enemies; 22 and

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[1] Jer. xxxii. 7-16. [2] Jer. xxxii. 17-25.

[3] The language is borrowed from the custom of pouring grain or the like into the lifted up fold of the outer garment, which is made, as it were, into a bag for the time. Ruth iii. 15. Prov. xvii. 23. Num. xi. 12. Isa. xl. 11; lxv. 6, 7. Luke vi. 38.

gavest them this land, which Thou hadst sworn to their fathers to give them—a land flowing with milk and honey. 23 And they came in, and took possession of it; but they obeyed not Thy voice, neither walked in Thy law:[1] they have done nothing of all that Thou commandest them to do—therefore Thou hast let all this evil come upon them.

24 Behold! the mounds[2] of the enemy reach to the town, to take it; the city is given, by sword, famine, and pestilence, into the hands of the Chaldeans who besiege it, and what Thou hast said is come to pass: Thou, Thyself, seest it! 25 Yet Thou hast said to me, O Lord Jehovah, Buy the field for money, and take witnesses to the purchase—though the city is already, as it were, given into the hands of the Chaldeans.

A prayer so lowly and fervent had favour with God. The still small voice of the Almighty presently answered it in the soul of the prophet.

27 Behold, I am Jehovah,[3] the God of all flesh: is there anything impossible to Me? 28 Therefore, thus saith Jehovah, Behold I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans, and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and he shall take it. 29 The Chaldeans who fight against it shall come in, and set fire to it, and burn it, and with it the houses on whose roofs they burned incense to Baal, and poured out drink offerings to other gods, to provoke Me to anger. 30 For the sons of Israel and the sons of Judah have done only evil before Me from their youth as a people. For the sons of Israel, as a whole, have done nothing but

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[1] Torah.

[2] The first step in a siege was probably to advance the battering ram. If the castle was built, as in the plains of Assyria and Babylonia, on an artificial eminence, an inclined plane reaching to the top of the height was formed of earth, stones, or trees, and the besiegers were thus able to bring their engines to the foot of the walls, and also to escalade the walls, the top of which might otherwise have been beyond the reach of their ladders. Layard's *Nineveh*, vol. ii. pp. 36–7. See Isa. xxxvii. 33; 2 Kings xix. 32. The Egyptians followed the same plan. Ezek. xvii. 17.

[3] Jer. xxxii. 26–35.

provoke Me with the work of their hands,[1] saith Jehovah. 31 This city, Jerusalem, also, has been to Me a provocation[2] of My anger and of My fury, from the day that they built it[3] to this day—demanding that I should put it away from before My face 32 on account of all the evil of the sons of Israel and of the sons of Judah, which they have done to provoke Me to anger; they, their kings, their princes,[4] their priests, and their prophets; the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 33 They turned their back to Me and not their face, and though I earnestly and unweariedly taught them through My true prophets, they would not listen, to receive instruction. 34 Instead of that, they set up their abominable idols in the House which is called by My name, to defile it, 35 and built high places to Baal in the Valley of Benhinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Moloch—which I neither commanded them to do nor ever had it in my mind to permit their doing; causing Judah, as it did, to sin.

36 Now, therefore,[5] thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, concerning this city, of which you rightly say that "it will be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, by sword, famine, and pestilence," 37 Behold! I will, hereafter, gather them from all lands whither I have driven them, in My anger and in My fury and in My fierce wrath. And I will bring them back to this place, and cause them to dwell securely in it, 38 and they shall be My people, and I will be their God. 39 And I will give them one heart and one way, so that they shall fear Me for ever,[6] for their own good and that of their children after them. 40 And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not draw back from them, or from doing them good; and I will put My fear in their hearts, so that they may not again turn away from Me as in the past. And I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will assuredly[7] plant them in this land, with My whole heart, and with My whole soul.

42 For thus saith Jehovah:[8] As I have brought all this great

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[1] Their idols. Chap. x. 3, 9. Deut. iv. 28. 2 Kings xix. 18.
[2] A burden on My anger, demanding indignation being shown.
[3] 2 Sam. v. 6, 7.
[4] Leading men.
[5] Jer. xxxii. 36-41.
[6] Deut. iv. 10; vi. 24.
[7] Heb., in truth.
[8] Jer. xxxii. 42-44.

evil on this people, so will I bring to them all the good that I have promised them. 43 And the open country shall be bought in this land, respecting which ye say, "It is desolate, without man or beast; it is given into the hands of the Chaldeans." 44 Men will once more buy fields[1] for money, and sign deeds, and seal them, and call witnesses to the purchase—here, in the land of Benjamin, and round about Jerusalem, and in the towns of Judah, and in the towns in the hills, and in those of the Shephelah, and in the towns of the Negeb. For I will put an end to their captivity, and restore them to their own country, saith Jehovah.

But the "Hearer of Prayer" was not content even with this full answer to His servant's petition. Not long afterwards, amidst the terrible progress of the siege, when many houses near the walls had been pulled down for materials of defence, and the prophet was still a prisoner in the court of the guard, "the Word" came to him a second time.

2 Thus saith Jehovah,[2] who does what He hath purposed; Jehovah who determines what He wills, and carries it out; Jehovah is His name! 3 Call upon Me and I will answer thee, and make known to thee great and secret things[3] which thou dost not know! 4 For thus says Jehovah, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city, Jerusalem, and concerning the houses of the kings of Judah, which have been pulled down for material with which to strengthen the town wall against the battering-rams,[4] and to build up new defences against the swords of the storming columns: 5 The citizens will advance to fight with the Chaldeans; but they will only fill the houses with the bodies of men, whom I have slain in My anger and in My fury, and for all whose wickedness I have hid My face from this city.

But still God has not finally cast off His people.

6 Behold,[5] I will lay on the wounds of the people a bandage and

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[1] Lit., "the field," *i.e.* land over the country.
[2] Jer. xxxiii. 1-5.
[3] Lit., "unapproachable."
[4] Lit., "mounts."
[5] Jer. xxxiii. 6-9.

healing salve, and will cure them, and I will pour down [1] on them abundance of peace and truth. 7 And I will bring back the captives of Judah and Israel, and will build up the state, as of old. 8 And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity that they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their sins that they have committed, and in which they have fallen away from Me. 9 And Jerusalem shall, again, be to Me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, who shall hear all the good that I do to it; and they shall fear and tremble [2] with awe, at all the goodness and all the prosperity that I prepare for it.

10 Thus saith Jehovah,[3] There shall again be heard in this place, of which you say, "It is desolate, without man and without beast"—in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem that are about to be left desolate, without men and without inhabitants, and without beast, 11 the sounds of joy and gladness; the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride,[4] and the words of singing:—

"Give thanks unto Jehovah of Hosts; for Jehovah is good,
For His mercy endureth for ever!"

the chant of them that bring the thankoffering into the House of Jehovah! For I will bring back the captives, and restore things as in your happiest times, saith Jehovah.

12 Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts,[5] Again, in this place which is about to be desolate, without man and without beast, and in all the towns of Judah, shall be a gathering place of shepherds, leading their sheep to rest. 13 In the hill towns, in the towns of the Shephelah, and in those of the Negeb, in the land of Benjamin

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[1] "Roll down."

[2] "A fearful joy."

[3] Jer. xxxiii. 10-11.

[4] A sound of music, shrill and sharp, announces the approach of a nuptial procession. In front, march the players on fifes and tambourines, and next two lines of women and girls, in the middle of whom is the bride, walking between two elder women. Four men hold over her head a dais of pink gauze, and a woman waves before her a large feather fan. She is entirely covered with a veil, and has on her head a red cloth, surmounted with a coronet of gold. The whole party utter cries of joy. Bovet's *Egypt, etc.*, p. 43.

[5] Jer. xxxiii. 12-14.

and in the parts round Jerusalem, and in the town of Judah, the sheep will again pass under the rod[1] of him that counts them, saith Jehovah. 14 Behold the days come, saith Jehovah, when I will perform that good word which I have spoken concerning the House of Israel and the House of Judah!

In those days of the Messiah the kingly and priestly offices will be restored.

15 In those days[2] and at that time, saith Jehovah, I will cause a Branch[3] of Righteousness to grow up from David,[4] and He will execute justice and righteousness in the land. 16 In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely; and for this men will call Him, Jehovah our Righteousness.

17 For thus saith Jehovah:[5] David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the House of Israel. 18 Nor shall the priests, the Levites, ever want a man before Me, to offer burnt offerings, to kindle the fire on the altar for flour offerings, and to burn sacrifices to Me, for ever.

This covenant with David, and with the priests, would be as sure as the order of nature.

20 Thus saith Jehovah:[6] If ye can break My covenant with the day and with the night, so that there shall be no longer day or night in its season, 21 then may, also, My covenant with David My servant be broken, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and My covenant with the Levites, the priests, My ministers! 22 As the hosts of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured, so will I multiply the seed of David My servant, and of the Levites, who minister to me.

The glorious assurance thus given respecting the throne and the altar, is next extended to the people as a whole.

[1] Lit., "hands."

[2] Jer. xxxiii. 15, 16.

[3] Lit., "a shoot, or sucker."

[4] Of David's race, from his root or stock. Verses 15 and 16 are the same as Jer. xxiii. 5, 6.

[5] Jer. xxxiii. 17, 18.

[6] Jer. xxxiii. 19-22.

24 Have you not seen what the people say [1]—"The two families, Judah and Israel, whom Jehovah chose, He has cast off." With such words they dishonour My people, declaring that it is no longer a nation in their eyes. 25 Thus saith Jehovah, If I have not established My covenant with day and night, or ordained the ordinances of heaven and earth, 26 then will I also cast off the seed of Jacob, and of David My servant, and take no more rulers from his seed, to be over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! But I will cause the captives to return and will have mercy upon them!

Thus darkly, in a Jewish dress, which alone, for centuries to come, could in any measure be intelligible to those who would ponder his words, did Jeremiah foretell the spiritual reign of the Messiah. Veiled in the imagery of the existing economy, their supreme significance must have been as mysterious to the prophet as to others. He had been directed to say, at former times, that the king and the priest would both perish from Israel,[2] and yet the Divine Voice now announces, through him, that both will endure for ever. To passages like this, above all, St. Peter must have referred when he spoke of the earnest search and inquiry of the holy men of old, as to the full meaning of the oracles which they uttered through the Spirit of God.

[1] Jer. xxxiii. 23–26.

[2] Jer. xxii. 30; xxx. 21; iii. 16; xxxi. 33.

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*Note to p.* 101.—"It would seem from Jer. xxxii. 10, 11, that clay came to be used in Judah as a writing material, as at Nineveh and Babylon—the inner clay record of a contract being covered with an outer coating—on which was inscribed an abstract of its contents, together with the names of the witnesses. Jeremiah's deed of purchase, moreover, was preserved in a jar, like the numerous clay deeds of the Egibi banking-firm, which existed at Babylon from the age of Nebuchadnezzar to that of Xerxes. These jars served the purpose of our modern safes."—Sayce's *Fresh Lights, etc.*, p. 105.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE FALL OF JERUSALEM.

The siege of Jerusalem had begun on the 10th of the month Kislew, nearly our December, in the year B.C. 591, but had been interrupted for two or three months by the departure of the Chaldeans, to repel the advance of Pharaoh Hophra. This effected, the struggle had recommenced with more fury than ever. But the Jews, like all Orientals, were stubborn in their resistance behind the walls of a fortress, and held out bravely against the tremendous superiority of their assailants. Nothing could subdue their courage. They had trusted in Hophra relieving them, but fought none the less manfully when they found their expectations deceived. Jeremiah, a prisoner in the court of the guard, in vain counselled surrender, as the only means of preserving the city, or the lives and liberties of its citizens. He was assailed by charges of treachery, and by threats for damping the spirits of the population. That a place, in all probability, of not more than 20,000[1] inhabitants should have kept at bay the whole strength of Nebuchadnezzar for nearly eighteen months, shows a noble defence, even admitting the natural strength of the posi-

[1] This is the estimate of Thenius, *B. d. Könige*, p. 466.

tion. Two thousand citizens of the best families, it is to be remembered, and a thousand skilled mechanics, with seven thousand of the bravest fighting men, had been carried off to Babylon ten years before.[1] But the fall of the city was only a question of time. The besiegers had invested it on every side, so that no provisions could enter, and they had possession of the whole country, far and near. Lachish and Azekah, in the Maritime Plain, had succumbed, and 3,023 persons of both sexes had been seized and led off to Babylon.[2] The thud

SIEGE OF A CITY BY THE ASSYRIAN ARMY.

On the left, soldiers in mail are throwing down the wall with crowbars. On an upper tower are women; one apparently wailing, the other encouraging the defenders. On the right is a battering ram with a tower over it, from which the Assyrians in armour shoot from the level of the top of the wall. The garrison are throwing over stones, etc., on soldiers who are guiding the ram. Archers kneel on the ground at the side of the battering ram. The general and his attendant, drawn in large size, are on the right; the attendant holding a shield before his master.

of the battering rams shook the walls day and night: archers made the defence increasingly hard, by constant showers of arrows from high wooden forts; catapults of all sizes hurled stones into the town with a force as deadly as that of modern bullets, and darts tipped

[1] 2 Kings xxiv. 14–16.

[2] Jer. lii. 28, for seventh year read seventeenth.

with fire kindled the roofs of houses; mines were dug under the walls, and attempts at escalade by ladders were renewed at every favourable opportunity.

But the besieged were not behind in their resources of defence. Houses were demolished, that new walls might be built of their materials, inside each spot weakened by the battering rams.[1] The ramparts were vigorously defended by archers and slingers, equal in bravery to those of the Chaldeans. The rams were caught, when possible, by doubled chains or ropes, to weaken their blows, or, if it might be, to capsize them. Lighted torches and firebrands were thrown on their roofs, and on those of the catapults, to set them on fire. The gates of the town were zealously defended against the efforts of the enemy to burst them open, or to burn them.[2] Nothing, however, could prevent the final catastrophe. Famine within the walls aided the besiegers without, and it was speedily followed, as is always the case, with an outbreak of pestilence. Food was well nigh gone. There had long been no bread.[3] Mothers were, at last, driven to murder and eat their children.[4] The richest citizens wandered about searching for scraps in the dunghills. Effeminate nobles, whose fairness and personal beauty had been their pride, were reduced to black-faced ghosts by hunger. To make matters worse, feuds broke out in the city. Some were for surrender, others for holding out to the last, and every street became a battle field.[5]

Yet, amidst the roar of war, the wail of mourners,

[1] Jer. xxxiii. 4.

[2] For this description of a Chaldean siege, see Layard's *Nineveh*, vol. ii. pp. 367 ff.

[3] Jer. xxxvii. 21; xxxviii. 9; lii. 6. Ezek. v. 10.

[4] Baruch ii. 3. Lam. iv. 10. [5] Lam. iv. 12–15.

the shrieks of the wounded and the despairing, and the tumult of intestine strife, Jeremiah never lost his self-possession, though forced to sit helpless in the midst of so much danger and privation. His deliverance from the cistern prison, in which, according to Josephus, the mire had reached up to his neck,[1] had put him under lasting obligation to the black eunuch who had rescued him. He was, moreover, now free to move about in the court of the guard, to which Ebed-melech frequently came, in passing out of the palace, and he repaid his kindness by cheering words, telling him that God would preserve him amidst all the dangers around, as a return for the favour shown to His servant.

16 Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel (said he), Behold I will bring My words upon this city for evil and not for good, and they shall be accomplished in that day, before thee. 17 But I will save thee, in that day, saith Jehovah; and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men whom thou fearest. 18 For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for booty to thee, because thou hast trusted in Me, saith Jehovah.[2]

At last came the end. The siege had lasted within a day or two of eighteen months,[3] but a practicable breach now invited the stormers. Waiting for the cover of darkness, the Chaldean force detached for this service moved out of their camp towards midnight, on the ninth of the month Tammuz, nearly our July, and, after a fierce struggle, Jerusalem was in their hands. Marching in by the Middle Gate of the inner wall, dividing Mount Zion from the Lower City, their generals took up their quarters near it,[4] as a point from which both the Upper and Lower

[1] Jos., *Ant.*, X. vii. 4. [2] Jer. xxxix. 15-18.
[3] Jer. lii. 4. Comp. with Jer. xxxix. 1; lii. 6.
[4] Jer. xxxix. 3.

City could be most easily controlled. The names and titles of some of them still survive, the latter, by their high rank, implying a large force to have been engaged, and thus showing the desperateness of the defence. Foremost, amidst a brilliant cavalcade, rode Nergal Sharezer —"Nergal, protect the king!" the name of a former monarch of Babylon—Samgar-Nebo, "May Nebo be propitious"—Sarsechim, one of the two chief eunuchs,[1]—a second Nergal Sharezer, the chief of the royal magi, or "deeply learned"—Nebuzaradan, "Nebo, grant me children," the commander of the personal guard[2] of Nebuchadnezzar; and Nebushartan, "Nebo, deliver me!" the second chief of the eunuchs.[3]

The shout of the conquerors was the signal to Zedekiah that all was lost. Only flight could save him. The breach had been made in the north wall, where alone close access to the fortifications was possible, and the Hill of Zion, on which the palace stood, was not yet in the hands of the Chaldeans. The south gate, close to the royal gardens, was still available. It lay at the south-east corner of the city, between the inner wall and that which ran across from the Tyropœan valley to Ophel, joining that spot to Mount Zion, and was known as the Horse Gate.[4] If Zedekiah, and the fugitives who might escape with him,—many of them deeply compromised in the revolt,—could reach Gilead, they might be safe. They therefore made for the Arabah,[5] south of the Dead Sea, striking across the wild stretches of the wilderness of Judah, to the south-east. But flight in that direction

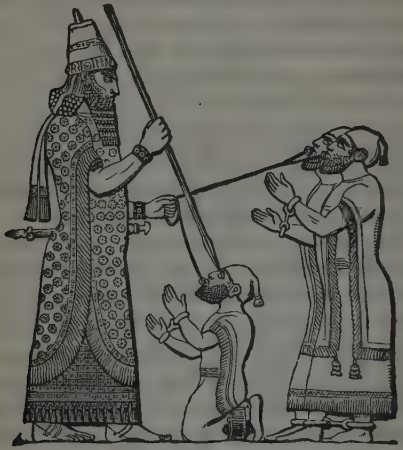
[1] Rabsaris means this also.

[2] The guard that stood before Nebuchadnezzar. Jer. lii. 10.

[3] For the meaning of the names, see Schrader, *Keilinschriften*, pp. 273–276.

[4] *Keil.* Neh. iii. 28. Jer. lii. 7. [5] Jer. lii. 7. Deut. i. 1.

proving impossible in the darkness, they turned towards the plain of the Jordan, north of their intended route. Meanwhile, the alarm was given, that the king and a strong band of men had broken through the Chaldean outposts, on the south-east of Jerusalem, and instant pursuit was ordered. The steep pass of the Kidron forthwith swarmed with troops pushing down towards Jericho, with only too fatal haste. Before the panic-stricken



THE ASSYRIAN KING BLINDING A MANACLED AND FETTERED PRISONER, WHO WITH THE TWO OTHERS IS FURTHER SECURED BY A METAL RING THROUGH THE LIP.

fugitives could cross the Jordan, they were overtaken, and the mere approach of the enemy was enough. Zedekiah was instantly deserted, and, with a number of his chief men, fell into the hands of the pursuers.[1] His daughters, who may not have been with him, were, however, fortu-

[1] Jer. xxxix. 5; lii. 8.

nate enough to escape, but only to fall into the hands of one Ishmael, a member of the royal family, soon to prove an arch traitor.

Thrown into chains at once, the captive king was led back to Jerusalem, and sent on, thence, to Riblah, ten days journey to the north—for it stood about thirty-five miles north of Baalbek. There, Nebuchadnezzar awaited him. Brought before the Great King, with the other captives, he was met with a storm of only too well-deserved reproach for his broken oath, and soon found that he could expect no mercy. All the princes taken with him were at once ordered to be slain. Then, with a refinement of cruelty, his own sons were put to death before him—the last sight he was ever to behold; for a spear, thrust into his eyes, most probably by Nebuchadnezzar himself, presently blinded him for ever. But this was only the beginning of his humiliation. Chained hand and foot, with a ring through his lips as if he were a wild beast, he was put into a cage, and carried off to Babylon, to lie in a dungeon till death put an end to his sufferings.[1] How long he survived is unknown, but he was apparently dead when Jehoiachin, his predecessor, was freed by Evil Merodach, the successor of Nebuchadnezzar, twenty-six years from this time.[2] Three kings of Judah were now captives in the hands of their enemies—Jehoahaz in Egypt, and two others in Babylon. The sins of the nation had been heavily punished; but it was to be purified by these trials, and fitted for the great work still before it, in preparing the way for the true spiritual kingdom of God. Such multiplied calamities sank into the heart of the race. Future generations forgot the weakness of Zedekiah, as they forgot the faults of his royal companions in misery, and thought of him

[1] Ezek. xix. 9. [2] Jer. lii. 31.

only as gentle and righteous.[1] A fast is still held on the 10th day of the 5th month to bewail his fall.

The Temple and the Upper Town held out, after the Lower City had fallen, and detained the Chaldeans for another month. Not till then did the townspeople yield, when utterly overpowered. The Temple was defended to the very last, the bravest of the warriors left perishing vainly in its courts. All classes, indeed, fought with desperation. Young men and women, veterans past their prime, and not a few who were stooping with years, fell with their faces to the hated foe.[2] The storming of a town, or indeed any of the wild and infamous scenes of war, have in all ages been the same.

> "The gates of mercy, *then*, *are* all shut up,
> And the flesh'd soldier, rough and hard of heart,
> *Ranges*, in liberty of bloody hand,
> With conscience wide as hell."[3]

But, at last, all resistance was crushed, and Jerusalem lay at the mercy of Nebuchadnezzar.

The defence had, however, been too resolute, the rebellion too troublesome, to leave any hope of pity. Such a focus of revolt must be ruthlessly destroyed. The town was given up, therefore, to plunder, and then burnt; the mansions of the rich and the lowly dwellings of the poor, sharing the same fate.[4] The walls, moreover, were levelled with the ground.[5] Nebuzaradan had been left in command, and he had no mercy. The last month's defence had infuriated him. The worst calamity that could overtake a nation in antiquity was inflicted on the conquered; their temple was burnt to the ground, and the remnant of the garrison, and of the inhabitants of both

[1] Jos., *Ant.*, X. vii. 5. [2] 2 Chron. xxxvi. 17. [3] Henry V.
[4] Jer. xxxix. 8; lii. 10. [5] Jer. lii. 14.

sexes, carried off to the Chaldean camp to await their doom. Everything worth taking had been brought out of the sanctuary before it was set on fire; the metal work of all kinds, which was of too great an amount to weigh, and the sacred utensils remaining since Solomon's time, forming the special booty.[1] The poorer classes, in town and country, were spared, in a measure, the fate of the more prosperous; only the strength of the population, apparently, being carried off. Hence, besides those who had escaped beyond the reach of the enemy, and waited their departure to return, a large proportion of the peasantry remained, to keep the land from reverting to desolation. The immediate appointment of a Jewish governor over them, show their numbers to have been considerable. The Great King, while determined to crush all rebellion, had no desire to turn one of his provinces into a wilderness.[2]

The campaign over, Nebuchadnezzar set up his throne of judgment. Marched to Riblah, the final crowd of prisoners were brought before him. Among these were Seraiah, the high priest, grandfather or great-grandfather of Ezra;[3] Zephaniah his deputy,[3] whom we have more than once met in the story of Jeremiah's life;[4] the keepers of the temple gates, who were dignified priests,[5] next in rank to Zephaniah; the commandant of the garrison, who had held out for a month after the fall of the Lower Town; seven of the confidential advisers of Zedekiah, members of the oligarchy who had forced him to his ruin; the chief scribe of the local militia, from which

[1] 2 Kings xxv. 13–17. Jer. lii. 17–23.
[2] 2 Kings xxv. 12. Jer. xxxix. 10; lii. 16.
[3] Ezra vii. 1. 1 Chron. v. 40. *Ewald*, vol. iii. p. 807. Jer. lii. 24.
[4] Jer. xxi. 1; xxix. 25; xxxvii. 3.
[5] Jer. xxxviii. 14.

all fighting men were drawn—an officer like our adjutant-general; and, with them, sixty survivors of the gallant band which had fought to the last.[1] All these were at once put to death. The rest were added to the long train of earlier captives, and marched off to Babylon. At the beginning of the siege, as has been said, 3,023 persons had been seized and led away to the Euphrates; during its progress 832 had been added to the number; but how many were taken at the fall of the city is not told. All its sufferings, however, had not finally crushed the spirit of the nation; for it was found expedient, four years later, to carry off 745 prisoners, in addition to all deported before.[2]

In the midst of these overwhelming disasters, Jeremiah remained not only unharmed, but protected. He had, long before, prophesied the ultimate downfall of Babylon, but this was not known. His services, in counselling surrender to the Chaldeans, on the contrary, must have been in all mouths. Orders were therefore issued by the Great King, himself, to see that he was cared for. Set free from the court of the guard, he was given into the care of Gedaliah, a prominent member of the Chaldean party in Jerusalem, who had been left in the country to govern it, for Nebuchadnezzar. Under his protection the prophet retired to Anathoth, and lived quietly among the remnant of the inhabitants.[3]

[1] 2 Kings xxv. 18–21. Jer. lii. 24–27.

[2] Jer. lii. 28–30. The Temple was burned in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. 2 Kings xxv. 8. The seventeenth and eighteenth years must therefore have been the first and second of the siege.

[3] Jer. xxxix. 11–14.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE "LAMENTATIONS" OF JEREMIAH.

THE survivors of the destruction of Jerusalem, left in Judah after the banishment of their fellow-countrymen to the Euphrates, seemed, for the time, overwhelmed by the calamities that had befallen their nation. The Temple they had thought invulnerable was burnt to the ground; Jerusalem, in which they had gloried as "the joy of the whole earth" was a waste of blackened ruins. The town gates seemed to have sunk into the ground;[1] the roads to Zion, once thronged with pilgrims, lay untravelled; no concourse gathered outside the walls, for gossip or business; even the walls themselves were thrown down, and jackals haunted the Holy Hill![2]

That such crushing disaster should have found varied expression in the verses of contemporary poets was in keeping with the genius of the race. For ages past every great event in their national history, whether glorious or sorrowful, had been commemorated in lyrics handed down from generation to generation. The defeat of Pharaoh, the triumph over Sisera, the death of Saul and Jonathan, the overthrow of the Northern kingdom, and the destruction of the army of Sennacherib, had been

[1] Lam. ii. 9. [2] Lam. ii. 8; i. 4; v. 18.

sung in poems known to every Hebrew child. So, now, was it to be with the crowning catastrophe of the fall of Jerusalem, carrying with it, as it did, the temporary extinction of the Jewish State. The seventy-ninth Psalm [1] seems to preserve to us such an outburst of religious and patriotic emotion; a wail, one might say, from the bleeding bosom of the nation!

Elohim! the heathen have thrust themselves into Thy inheritance;
They have defiled Thy holy temple! They have laid Jerusalem in ruins!
They have given the corpses of Thy servants as food to the birds of heaven;
The flesh of Thy Ḥasidim [2] to the wild beasts of the earth!
They have poured out their blood like water round Jerusalem, and no one buried them!
We have become a reproach among our neighbours,
A scorn and derision to them that are round about us.

How long, Jehovah (wilt Thou be angry)? Wilt Thou keep wrath for ever?
Pour out Thy wrath on the heathen, who do not know Thee;
On the kingdoms that do not call upon Thy name!
For they have devoured Jacob: they have laid waste his pastures.
Oh remember not against us the sins of our forefathers;
Let Thy tender mercies speedily come to us, for we are brought very low!

Help us, O God of our salvation, for the honour of Thy name!
Save us and forgive [3] our sins, for Thy name's sake.
Why should the heathen say, "Where is their god?"

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[1] Delitzsch assigns Pss. lxxiv. and lxxix. to the time of Antiochus, 2 Macc. viii. 1–4 (*c.* B.C. 167). Moll thinks Ps. lxxix. refers to the destruction of the Temple, B.C. 588. So also does Dr. Kay. The fact is, the dates of the Psalms in many cases are conjectural.

[2] = afterwards, to "Zealots."

[3] Lit., "cover"—then "forgive"—"accept an expiation for," etc.

May the revenge of the blood of Thy servants, which has been shed,
Be made known among the heathen, before our eyes!

Let the groans of those lying in chains come before Thee;
According to the greatness of Thy might[1] preserve Thou those appointed to die;[2]
And render back to our neighbours, sevenfold, into their bosom,[3]
Their reproach, with which they have reproached Thee, O Lord!
So we, Thy people, and the flock of Thy pasture
Will thank Thee for ever, and will speak forth Thy praise to all generations!

The eighty-third Psalm may also be a remembrance of this sad time.[4] It specially dwells on the hostility shown to Judah by the neighbouring peoples, who should have helped her in her straits. Instead of doing this, they had joined the enemy against her.

Elohim! give Thyself no rest: be not silent: be not still, O El!
For, lo, thine enemies rage loudly; they that hate Thee carry their heads high!
They have planned crafty schemes against Thy people;
They have consulted together against those who are under Thy protection:
They say, "Up! let us destroy them from among the nations,
That the name of Israel be no more remembered"!

For with one heart have they consulted together; they have made a league against Thee.
The tents of Edom and of the Ishmaelites; of Moab and the Hagarenes;[5]

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[1] Lit., "arm." [2] Lit., "sons of death." [3] Vol. v. p. 380.

[4] It has been assigned by different critics to the Maccabean age, that of Nehemiah, that of Jehoshaphat, and that of Nebuchadnezzar. It appears to suit the last period as well as any other, though the mention of Amalek, unless introduced by the license of poetry, seems to hint at an earlier date.

[5] These races were all more or less tent dwellers, living in the regions south and east of Judah.

Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre:
Geshur,[1] also, has joined itself to them: it has lent its arm to the sons of Lot.

Do to them as Thou didst to Midian;
As to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the torrent-stream Kishon;[2]
They were destroyed at Endor,[3] they lay like filth on the ground,
Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb;[4]
All their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna,[5]
Who said, in their day, "Let us take possession of the pastures of Elohim!"[6]

My God, make them like whirling dust; like stubble before the wind!
As fire burns the *yaar*, as flame kindles the mountain forests
So chase them with Thy storm; overwhelm them with Thy tempest!
Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Thy face, O Jehovah;
Let them be confounded and overwhelmed for ever;
Let them be put to shame[7] and perish, that they may know
That Thou—whose name is Jehovah; that Thou, alone,
Art the Highest over all the earth!

It is, however, in the short series of elegiac poems, known in our English Bible as "The Lamentations of Jeremiah," that we realize the intensity of the sufferings which Jerusalem had to endure before its fall, and the bitterness and sorrow with which its citizens lamented its fate. In the Hebrew text no author of these compositions is named, but a very old tradition ascribes them to Jeremiah. Already in the Septuagint translation, made from one to two centuries before Christ, the state-

[1] *Lagarde.* The Hebrew has Assyria, but a very small change is required for the emendation in the text.
[2] Judges v. 21. [3] Near Tabor. Judges v. 19. [4] Judges vii. 25.
[5] Judges viii. 5. [6] Pastures or "homesteads" of Elohim.
[7] Lit., "grow red."

ment is prefixed to the Book, that "It came to pass, after Israel was taken captive, and Jerusalem made desolate, Jeremiah sat weeping, and lamented this Lamentation over Jerusalem," and to this the Vulgate[1] adds, "in bitterness of heart, sighing and crying." The Arabic version quotes the words of the Septuagint, and the Targum begins with the statement that "Jeremiah the prophet and great priest" was the author. It is only in recent times that critics have questioned the uniform belief of the Jewish and early Christian Church, and ascribed the Lamentations to some other author.[2] Nothing that is urged, however, need shake our confidence in these touching laments being the production of the great prophet. The grotto in which he is said to have written them is still shown in the face of a rocky hill, on the western side of the city. But whether this tradition be correct or not, they show, in every verse, the signs of fresh and irrepressible sorrow, as if the scene still lay beneath the eyes of the poet, and the events commemorated were still agitating the heart. Nor is it any valid objection that the form of the different poems of which the book consists appears artificial. The first, second, third, and fourth chapters are written in verses,

[1] Fourth century after Christ.

[2] Ewald supposes Lamentations was written by Baruch, or some other of Jeremiah's disciples, and Bunsen follows him, as he does generally. Naegelsbach thinks that Jeremiah was not the author. Thenius fancies that different poets wrote different chapters. This, Reuss opposes, ascribing the Book to some unknown composer. But the grounds of this scepticism as to Jeremiah's authorship seem slight when closely examined. Nor is it a matter of any serious moment who was the inspired author. The Book dates from immediately after the siege of Jerusalem, whoever wrote it. The question is curious, but of no real practical weight.

each of which commences with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet, the third chapter consisting of verses of three lines, each beginning with the same letter, while the order of two of the letters is reversed in the second, third and fourth.[1] The fifth, though not alphabetical, is composed in twenty-two verses, the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. But no one ever thought of challenging the authorship of a hymn, because the

WAILING PLACE AT THE WALLS OF THE TEMPLE, JERUSALEM.

versification was peculiar. As a help to memory, the alphabetical structure may have been of great use; or it may have been chosen as best suited for a theme deserving, above all others, to be enshrined in a measure apparently esteemed in the writer's day.

The "Lamentations" are still read yearly by the Jews, to commemorate the burning of the Temple. Every

[1] The letters Pe and Ayin (פ and ע.)

Friday, Israelites, old and young, of both sexes, gather at the wailing place in Jerusalem, where a few of the old stones of the Temple still remain in the wall, and recite these sad verses and suitable Psalms, amidst tears, as they fervently kiss the stones. On the ninth of the month Ab, nearly our July, this dirge, composed about six hundred years before Christ, is read aloud in every synagogue over the world.

The first poem describes the miseries of Jerusalem and Judah during and after the siege.

1 Ah, how she sits there, lonely,[1] the town once so rich in
people;[2]
How is she become like a widow, who was great among the
nations!
The queen of the lands[3] around—how has she become a poor
slave!
Bitterly weeps she by night—tears hang on her cheeks,
None has she to comfort her of all those who loved her;
All her friends have betrayed her and turned to be her foes.
3 Gone into exile is Judah—worn down by sorrow and slavery,[4]
Finding no rest where she now sits among the heathen.
All her pursuers came up with her, (the hunted hind), when her
way closed in before her.[5]
4 Desolate, the roads to Zion mourn; no throngs now come to
her feasts;
All her gates are desolate; her priests sigh;
Her maidens are led away,[6] and she herself is in bitterness;

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[1] Emptied of her inhabitants. [2] Lam. i.

[3] Lit. "provinces," perhaps in allusion to the other provinces of Babylon, or to the former empire of Israel.

[4] Her long sufferings at the hands of Assyria, Egypt, and Chaldea.

[5] Lit. "between the straits," or narrows, from which escape was impossible.

[6] Sept. by a slight change of the Hebrew. The rendering "afflicted," in the A. V., from the Heb., if right, may refer to

5 Her[1] foes have become her masters: her enemies enjoy quiet prosperity,
For Jehovah has sunk her in trouble for her many transgressions.
Her tender children are led away captive by the oppressor.
6 Vanished from the Daughter of Zion is all her glory;
Her princes are come to be like deer that find no pasture,[2]
So that they fled, no longer swiftly strong, before their pursuers.
7 Zion[3] thinks sadly of the days of her misery and forced wanderings,
Of all her pleasant things that she had in the old days,
Before her people fell into the hand of the adversary, and she had no helper.
The oppressors saw her, and mocked at her calamities.[4]
8 Heinously has Jerusalem sinned; therefore has she become an abhorrence.
All who once honoured, despise her, for they have seen her shame;
She, herself, also sighs, and turns away her face.[5]
9 Tainted and foul are her skirts, for she had not thought of the sure end of her sins,[6]
Therefore she sank thus wondrously, and has no one to comfort her:
"See, O Jehovah," cries she, "my sorrow; how proudly the foe deals with me."
10 Yea, he stretched out his hand over all her ancient treasures.
She has seen the heathen enter her sanctuary;[7]
Them, whom Thou hast commanded never to come into the congregation.
11 Craving for bread, all her people wearily sigh;

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their no longer having a share in the religious festivities. Exod. xv. 20. Jud. xxi. 19–21. Ps. lxviii. 25.

[1] Soft H.

[2] A reference perhaps to the flight of Zedekiah and others.

[3] Heb., Jerusalem.

[4] Not, at her "Sabbaths."

[5] Lit., "turns backwards."

[6] Deut. xxxii. 29.

[7] The Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites, as part of the besieging army, had entered even the Holy of Holies for plunder. Deut. xxiii. 3, 4. Ps. lxxix.

They gave their dearest things away for food, to keep them alive.[1]
"See, Jehovah, and behold, how I, Jerusalem, am despised!"

12 Little, seems it to you, all ye passers by the way? Behold and see,
Is any sorrow like that inflicted on me,
Me, whom Jehovah has troubled in the day of His fiery wrath?
13 My bones hath He filled with fire from on high; it glows through them.[2]
He has spread a net for my feet; he has driven me[3] into it (like a hunted deer),
He has made me desolate, and sick at heart all the day.
14 Now is the yoke of my sins bound on me by His hand;
Twisted into strong bonds, they are come on my neck; He has bowed down my strength;
Jehovah has given me into their hands, before whom I cannot resist.
15 Slighted[4] by Jehovah have been all my mighty men in my midst;
A solemn feast was proclaimed against me—to crush my young braves;
Jehovah has trodden, as in a wine press, the virgin daughter of Judah.
16 At[5] these things my eyes weep—my eyes, running with tears,
For they who should comfort me, they who should quicken me to life again, are far from me.
My children are destroyed, for the foe has prevailed!
17 Pleading hands are stretched out by Zion, yet has she no comforter.

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[1] Lit., "to bring back their life."
[2] Ewald, by an emendation.
[3] Lit., "turned me back into it when I was trying to escape."
[4] Thus, Gesenius and De Wette. "Surrendered," "given up," Keil and Ewald.
[5] A for Ayin in the Heb. alphabet. We have no letter exactly similar.

Jehovah has commanded that those round Jacob[1] should be
his foes;
Jerusalem has become a loathing among them.

18 "Truly[2] Jehovah is only righteous, for I have rebelled
against His word;
Hear, therefore, all ye nations, and behold my sorrow.
My maidens and my young men are gone into captivity.
19 Coldly did my lovers betray me when I called to them;
My priests and my elders perished of hunger in the city,
Seeking for food to bring back their life.
20 Rise and behold, O Jehovah, how deep is my grief; my soul[3]
glows within me.
My heart beats quick[4] in my bosom, for I have greatly
rebelled;
The sword makes me childless without; within, there is death.
21 Sighing[5] aloud 'I have no comforter,' my trouble is heard;
All my foes have learned of my sorrow; they are glad Thou
hast caused it;
But Thou bringest on the day Thou hast foretold, when they
will be as I am.
22 To Thy throne rise all their wickedness!
Do to them what they have done to me, for all my trans-
gressions;
For many are my sighs and my heart is faint."

A lament over the Divine judgments on the city, and the desolation of Judah, and a touching supplication on their behalf, succeed.

1 Ah![6] how has Jehovah covered the Daughter of Zion with
His anger, like a cloud!
He has cast down the glory of Israel from heaven to the earth,
And has not remembered His footstool in the day of His
wrath!

---

[1] The nations round Judah. [2] The T should be Ts.
[3] Lit., "my inner parts." [4] Lit., "turns," "is greatly moved."
[5] Should be Sh. [6] Lam. ii.

2 (Blasted and) destroyed are all the homesteads of Jacob by Jehovah, nor has He pitied them;
He has thrown down, in His wrath, the strongholds of the Daughter of Judah;
He has cast them to the ground; He has dishonoured the kingdom and its princes.
3 Grimly fierce, He has cut off every horn[1] of Israel;
He has drawn back His right hand from the face of the enemy,
And burned up Jacob, like flaming fire that consumes all round it.
4 Drawn has He His bow, like an enemy; standing (to aim) with his right hand, like a foe;
And has slain all that was pleasant to the eye;
He has poured out His fury like fire in the tent of the Daughter of Zion.
5 He, Jehovah, has become like a foe: He has destroyed Israel;
Destroyed all her castles; broken down all her strongholds,
And heaped up groans and sighs on the Daughter of Judah.
6 Violently has He destroyed His Temple,[2] (in its sacred grove) as if it had been a common garden; He has destroyed the place of His Feasts.
Jehovah has caused feasts[3] and Sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion.
And rejected in His fierce anger both king and priest.
7 (Zealous against us), Jehovah has cast aside His altar; He has profaned His sanctuary;
He has given the walls of her castles into the hand of the foe.
They raised a wild noise in the House of Jehovah, as if it had been one of our festivals!
8 (He), Jehovah, had purposed to level the wall of the Daughter of Zion:
He stretched out the measuring line: He did not hold back His hand from destroying.
He made rampart and wall to lament—sunk in ruins together.
9 (Torn down or burnt), her gates have, (as it were), sunk into the ground; He has destroyed and broken her bars.

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[1] Every means of defence. [2] Lit., "Tent," or "covert."
[3] "Appointed seasons."

Her king and her princes are among the heathen; the Law is
no more.
Even her prophets obtain no longer a vision from Jehovah.
10 In silence, the elders of the Daughter of Zion sit on the
ground;
They have cast dust on their heads; they are girded with
sackcloth;
The virgins of Jerusalem have sunk their heads to the earth.
11 Closed by much weeping, my eyes fail; my whole body
glows;
My liver is poured on the earth, at the destruction of the
Daughter of my people,
For the children and sucklings perish for hunger in the streets
of the city:
12 Lying in the streets of the city, dying, like the mortally
wounded,
They cry to their mothers "Where is the corn and wine?"[1]
Their souls breathing themselves out, meanwhile, on their
mother's bosom.

13 (Maiden) daughter of Jerusalem! what (message of comfort)
shall I give thee? to what shall I liken thee?
What shall I compare to thee, for thy consolation, O virgin
daughter of Zion?
Thy trouble[2] is great as a sea; who can heal thee?
14 Nothing but lies and deceit[3] have thy false prophets spoken
to thee;
They have not laid open thy sin, to prevent thy being led into
captivity;
They prophesied to thee only false "burdens," deceitful and
ruinous.

15 Still, as men pass by, all clap their hands together at thee in
scorn;
They hiss, and shake their heads at the Daughter of Jeru-
salem.

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[1] These two represent food and drink generally.
[2] Lit., "breach, or "wound."
[3] Lit., "whitewash," "plaster," "pretence."

"Is this the city," say they, "that men call 'The Perfection
of Beauty,' 'The Joy of the whole earth?'"
16 (Pleased[1] at thy fall) thine enemies open their mouths wide
at thee;
Hissing (in contempt) and gnashing their teeth (in rage) they
say, "We have destroyed her!
This is the day for which we hoped—now we have found and
seen it!"

17 All that Jehovah had determined has He done;
He has fulfilled His word, ordered in days of old—He has
destroyed without pity;
He has let the foe rejoice over thee; he has raised the horn of
thine oppressors.
18 Their[2] heart cried in sorrow to Jehovah!
Let thy tears flow down day and night like a stream,[3] O wall
of the Daughter of Zion!
Give thyself no rest;[4] let not the apple of thine eye cease
weeping!
19 Cry out in the night, rising up; in the beginning of the
watches[5]
Pour out thy heart like water before the face of the Lord;
Lift up thy hands to Him, for the life of thy children,
That perish for hunger at every corner of the streets.
20 Regard, O Jehovah, and behold, to whom hast Thou thus
done!
Shall women eat the fruit of their womb—the babes of their
nursing?
Shall the priest and the prophet lie slain in the sanctuary of
the Lord?
21 Shall the boy and the grey-haired man lie dead on the ground
in the streets?

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[1] In the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th chapters the Hebrew letter **Pe** comes before **Ayin**.

[2] T should be **Ts**. [3] A mountain rain-torrent.

[4] In prayer. Lit., "grow not cold."

[5] In the beginning of each watch. In Jeremiah's time there were three night watches of four hours each. Exod. xiv. 24. Ps. lxiii. 6.

My virgins and my young men have fallen by the sword;
Slain by Thee in the day of Thy wrath, slain without pity!
Thou callest my terrors round me, like the crowds on the day of a feast;
None of my children escaped or could flee, in the day of the wrath of Jehovah;
Those I had nursed and brought up has my foe destroyed.

Now follows a touching poem on the sufferings and the consolation of the godly.[1] It is written in verses of three lines, each verse beginning in all its lines with the same letter; and the successive verses following the Hebrew alphabet in regular order—perhaps to impress the poem more easily on the memory. It is put in the mouth of an imaginary singer—a survivor of the siege.

1 Alas! I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath!
2 Alas! He has guided and led me through darkness—not through light!
3 Against Me has He turned, again and again, His hand, all the day long;
4 Bruised[2] has He my flesh and my skin; He has broken my bones;
5 Built up, round about me, poison and travail,
6 Brought me into darkness, like the long dead!
7 Girded me round has He, with a wall, that I cannot get out, He has made my chain heavy.
8 Gives no ear to my prayer when I cry and call.
9 Girded round my paths with a wall of squared stones; He breaks up my paths.
10 Dread is He to me as a bear, or a lion hidden in secret.
11 Dumb with terror has He made me; driving me from my ways, and letting the wild beasts tear me in pieces.
12 Drawing His bow, He has set me as a mark for the arrow.
13 He has let the sons of His quiver[3] pierce into my loins.[4]

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[1] Lam. iii. 1-21.
[2] Lit., "rubbed away."
[3] *i.e.* arrows.
[4] Lit., "kidneys."

14 H ld in derision am I by all my people: their scoff all the day.
15 He has filled me with bitterness and made me drink wormwood.
16 With gravel stones has he broken my teeth; He has strewn me with ashes.
17 Withheld has He, my soul, from peace: I have forgotten prosperity.
18 Withered for ever, said I, is my strength, and my hope from Jehovah.

19 Set[1] before Thee my affliction and my misery; the wormwood and the poison;
20 Set before my soul are they; it is bowed down within me;
21 Seeing therefore I thus keep them before me, I will hope (for God's mercy).

Now follow words of contrition and hope.

22 Wholly[2] of Jehovah's mercy is it that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.
23 (His mercies) are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness.
24 He, Jehovah, is my portion, says my soul: therefore will I hope in Him.
25 To those who cling to Him, Jehovah is good: to the soul that seeks Him;
26 To work patiently for the salvation of Jehovah is good;
27 To bear the yoke (of trouble) in his youth is good for a man.
28 If Jehovah bow him with sorrows, let him sit alone in silence;
29 If, perchance, there be hope, let him kiss the dust meekly;
30 If even it bring reproach, let him give his cheek to the smiter.
31 Cast off the Lord may, but not for ever!
32 Cause grief He may, but He also pities, in the multitude of His mercies.
33 Contrary to His heart is it to afflict or to grieve the children of men.

---

[1] Here and in the next two lines the first letter should be Z. "Set before" is used as = "remember."
[2] Wh should be H.

34 Lord! to tread in pieces under one's feet all the prisoners of the earth—
35 Lord! to turn aside the right of a man in his dispute before the face of the Most High—
36 Lord! to defraud a man in his cause—is not pleasing to Thee![1]

Having uttered these words of submission and hope, the prophet breaks out afresh into expressions of suffering; his grief being still irrepressible, notwithstanding his trust in the justice and goodness of God. All things are in His hands. Evil as well as good is by His appointment: the former coming on man for his sin; the latter, as the gift of heavenly bounty. But amidst all the trials of his country, the Throne of Grace is ever open; to that let the mourners humbly repair! Nor let them complain if they receive chastening from the Lord; the just punishment of their offences!

37 Man never was, who could speak, and it came to pass, if the Lord had not commanded;
38 Must not evil as well as good proceed out of the mouth of the Most High?
39 Man, left alive, must not sigh, but reform; for why sigh over deserved punishment of one's sins?
40 No, let us, rather, prove and search our ways, and turn to Jehovah!
41 Not only our hands, but our hearts, also, be lifted up to God in the heavens!
42 Not one of us but has sinned or rebelled, and Thou hast not pardoned.
43 Sore offended, Thou hast put on wrath, like a garment, and punished us; slaying us without pity.
44 Supplication cannot pass through to Thee, for Thou hast hid Thyself in a thick cloud.

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[1] I have changed the person in this verse from the third to the second, to meet the exigencies of the alphabetical structure.

45 Sordid offscourings and refuse hast Thou made us, in the midst of the nations.
46 (Proudly) have all our enemies opened their mouths at us,
47 Panic alarm, and the pit of destruction,[1] have we round us; devastation and ruin.
48 Pouring down from my eyes, flow streams of tears, for the destruction of the daughter of my people.
49 Always, without intermission; tears trickle down without ceasing;
50 Always, till Jehovah look down and behold us, from heaven.
51 At the thought of all the daughters of my city my eye troubles my heart.

The prophet here interrupts the narrative of the sorrows of his people, by recalling his own sufferings at their hands.

52 Terribly[2] have my enemies hunted me without cause, like a bird
53 They tried to cut off my life in a pit[3] and put a stone on its mouth.[4]
54 The waters flowed over my head, so that I thought, "I am lost."
55 Calling on Thy name, O Jehovah, I cried out of the depth[5] of the cistern;
56 "Close not thine ear to my voice, to my sighing, to my cry."
57 Come near, didst Thou, in the day when I called, and saidst, "Fear thou not."
58 (Righteous) Lord, Thou didst defend my life;[6] Thou didst save it!

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[1] In which wild animals are taken.

[2] T should in this and the two following lines be Ts.

[3] The same word as that for the pit or cistern in which Jeremiah was confined.

[4] A reference, apparently, to the putting the heavy stone lid, over the cistern in which Jeremiah was imprisoned. Jer. xxxviii. 6.

[5] Lit., "lowest depths."

[6] Lit., "plead the suit for my life."

59 Regarded hast Thou, O Jehovah, my wrongful treatment—
judge Thou my cause!
60 Revenge taken on me by them, Thou sawest it all; and all
that they plotted against me!
61 Shame cast on me by them, Thou didst hear, O Jehovah; all
that they plotted against me!
62 Sayings of those that rose up against me, and their murmured
schemes for my hurt, all the day.
63 See, at their sitting down together and their rising up, I am
their scoff!
64 Take vengeance on them, O Jehovah, according to the works
of their hands;
65 Their heart, do thou blind it[1]—let Thy curse rest upon them;
66 Turn on them and destroy them, in wrath, from under the
heavens of Jehovah!

These three laments not having calmed the emotion of the prophet at the remembrance of the awful sufferings of his people, he adds a fourth, in which the miseries endured in the siege are painted in the most touching detail. Comparing the citizens to fine gold and to the stones of the sanctuary,[2] he bewails their fate under the figure of the dimming of the one and the throwing down of the other.

1 Ah! how is the gold grown dull![3] the finest gold changed!
How are the holy stones thrown down, at every corner of the
streets.[4]
2 Burghers of Zion, the noblest; men to be weighed against
finest gold,
Ah! how they are treated as if they were common earthenware
pitchers, the work of a potter's hands!
3 (Gaunt) she-wolves[5] offer the breast to their young and suckle
them;

---

[1] Lit., "cover" hence "blind."
[2] Zech. ix. 16.
[3] Lam. iv.
[4] Lam. ii. 19.
[5] See note on the word "tannin," vol. v. p. 45. It means really any fierce beast, or monster; here, nearly all understand "the she-wolf" to be intended.

But the daughter of my people has grown heartless as the ostrich in the wilderness, (which forsakes its young when alarmed by the hunter).[1]

4 Dried up by thirst, the tongue of the suckling cleaves to the roof of its mouth;
The young children ask bread; no one breaks it to them.
5 Hollow-cheeked, those wont to eat dainties wander in the streets,
Those brought up wearing scarlet, are glad to make dunghills their couch.
6 Worse is the punishment of the sin of the daughter of my people, than that of the sin of Sodom:
It was destroyed in a moment; the hands of the foe did not rest on her (as on us).
7 Zion's princes shone white as snow; they were whiter than milk;
They were more ruddy in body than corals; their form was lovely as that of a well-cut sapphire.
8 (Hideous now!), their faces blacker than darkness with famine; they are not recognised in the streets;
Their skin cleaves to their bones; it is dried up like wood.
9 Those slain with the sword are better off than their neighbours, that perish of hunger!
For these die, gnawed through by famine, for want of the fruits of the field.
10 Infants, and these their own, have been boiled by mothers, till then full of pity.
Such babes were their food, in the downfall of the daughter of my people.

## Jerusalem has been utterly destroyed.

11 Carried out to the uttermost by Jehovah is His fury; He has poured forth His burning wrath,
And kindled a fire in Zion that has devoured even its foundations.

---

[1] *Tristram*, p. 238.

12 Little would the kings of the earth, or the inhabitants of the world[1] have thought,
That the foe and the oppressor would enter into the gates of Jerusalem![2]

The sins of the prophets and priests were the great cause of the fall of the city. A strong faction, led by members of these orders, confident in the speedy return of their brethren from exile, had raised fierce tumults during the siege, to prevent surrender; many citizens perishing in the contests thus excited.

13 Mainly for the sins of her prophets and for the iniquities of her priests,
Who shed the blood of the just in her midst,[3] (has this catastrophe come on her)
14 Numbers of them wandered blindly through the streets, soiled with blood,
So that no one could touch their clothing.
15 "Stand back!" men cried out to them, "ye unclean!" "stand back! stand back! Touch us not!"[4] Yet they strove,[5] and roamed about, saying
"The exiles will not sojourn long among the heathen."

---

[1] An Oriental hyperbole for "any one."

[2] The Jews thought their capital impregnable, in spite of its having been repeatedly spoiled by enemies. Perhaps the defeat of Sennacherib led to this fancy; but the belief that Jehovah would defend it as "His seat," the locality of His Temple, was undoubtedly the main ground of confidence in its security.

[3] Jer. vi. 13; xxiii. 11; xxvi. 8; etc.

[4] They were warned off like lepers, Lev. xiii. 45. They should have raised the cry, but not doing so, the people raised it. This verse shows that the law of the leper, in Leviticus, was then well known.

[5] The Hebrew word used here may be derived from a verb meaning "to strive," as well as from one meaning "to flee away," and the sense seems much better.

16 (Proud ones), the glance of Jehovah scattered them: He no
longer paid respect to them: and so
The citizens regarded not the faces of priests, and had no
reverence for the Elders.
17 As for us, (the besieged), our eyes pined away, looking in
vain for help, (from Egypt or elsewhere),
Our weary watching has all been for a nation that could not
help us!
18 The foe, from their siege works, kept their eyes on our very
footsteps, so that we could not walk in the streets;
Our end is near, our days are completed; yea, our end is
come!
19 Keener in their swiftness than the eagles of heaven were our
pursuers;
They hunted after us on the mountains: they lurked for us in
the desert.
20 (Royal Zedekiah), the breath of our nostrils, the Anointed of
Jehovah, was caught in their pits,[1]
Of whom we said, "Under his shadow shall we live among
the nations."

The treacherous part taken in this time of trouble by Edom, a nation related to Judah, had sunk into the heart of the Hebrews.

21 Sing and be glad, O daughter of Edom, inhabitress of the
land of Uz!
But the cup will come to thee, also! Thou, too, shalt be
drunk with the shame of ruin: thou, too, shalt expose
thyself to contempt!
22 Thy punishment[2] is over, O daughter of Zion: Jehovah will
no more carry thee away into captivity:
But He will hereafter visit thee for thy iniquity,[3] O daughter
of Edom: He will lay bare thy sins!

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[1] As before, a figure from the pits in which wild beasts were taken.

[2] Lit., "thy iniquity," the cause being put for the penalty.

[3] Same word in Heb. as is translated "punishment" in the line above.

The last poem in this series is an earnest prayer to God not to forsake His people for ever. The agonies of the siege, and of the storming of Jerusalem, had been already painted in vivid colours, but they had so burnt themselves into the memory of the prophet, that he cannot refrain from reciting them once more. This done, however, he lifts his voice to Jehovah, the one sure Help and Saviour, and closes his lament by leaving the fate of his nation to the infinite pity of its Heavenly King. The artificial structure of the verses, beginning with successive letters, is now discontinued, but their number is the same as that of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

1 Remember, Jehovah,[1] what has happened to us; behold, and see our reproach!
2 Our inheritance is made over to foreigners, our houses to aliens.
3 Orphans are we, without a father; our mothers are as widows.
4 We drank our water only for money; we got our fuel only for payment.
5 We were pursued, with the hand of the foe on our necks: we were worn out and had no rest.
6 We gave ourselves up[2] to the Egyptians and to the Assyrians, for enough to eat.
7 Our fathers sinned and are not: we bear the punishment of their sins.
8 Slaves—the court eunuchs of Egypt and Chaldea—have ruled us: no one delivers us out of their hands.
9 We reap our grain[3] at the risk of our lives, from the sword of the Arabs of the desert.
10 Our skin burns like an oven with the feverish blast of famine.
11 The women of Zion were dishonoured: the maidens in the towns of Judah.

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[1] Lam. v.
[2] Lit., "gave the hand," as a sign of submission.
[3] Lit., "get our bread."

12 Princes were hung up by the hand (on the cross): the faces of the Elders received no respect.
13 They took our strong young men to grind their mills; our lads staggered under loads of fuel.
14 Elders no longer gathered at the gate: young men gave up their songs.
15 The joy of our hearts has ceased: our dancing is turned into lamentation.
16 The crown of our head—our honour—has fallen off: woe to us that we sinned!
17 For this, our heart is faint: for this, our eyes grow dark—
18 For Mount Zion, because it lies waste: the foxes run over it.

Then follows an earnest prayer.

19 Thou, Jehovah, reignest for ever: Thy throne, from generation to generation.
20 Why wilt Thou forget us for ever? why wilt Thou forsake us so long?
21 Lead us back to Thee, O Jehovah, that we may truly return to Thee: renew our days as of old!
22 Thou wilt not surely wholly forget us? Thou wilt not be angry with us beyond measure?

Thus wailed the genius of Hebrew poetry over the desolation of Judah and Jerusalem! Other cities and countries have had their minstrels to lament their public sorrows, but the national elegies of the Jew alone have spread among all races of the earth and remain fresh after twenty-five centuries. Nor are they even yet without deep and practical interest, recording, as they do, the catastrophe that awaits any community, however highly favoured, which forgets that public and private righteousness, alone, secures permanent prosperity.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### EDOM AND THE NATIONS ROUND.

THE psalms and laments in which Judah sighed over its national ruin became sacred among all the widely-dispersed race, from their first appearance, and at once deepened the grief over the fall of their country, and made it abiding. But with tearful regret were mingled other feelings. The "delightsome land" had ceased to be theirs; in part, as we have seen, through the treachery of the communities round it, many of whom were kindred in blood to the sufferers.[1]

Edom had even sent troops to assist the Chaldeans in the siege, and these had shown a bitter and remorseless hostility, greater than that of the army they aided. The fiercest mutual hatred had, indeed, for centuries, thrust apart the brother races of Jacob and Esau. The refusal of a passage through Mount Seir to the Hebrews, under Moses, in their march from Egypt, nine hundred years before, had entailed the long sufferings of the wilderness life, and had never been forgotten. Fierce war had raged between the two peoples since the time of David's temporary conquest of Edom. Under Joram, Amaziah, and Uzziah, in succession, it had been virtually

[1] Ezek. xxv. 3, 8, 12, 15; xxvi. 2.

a Jewish province, till the reign of the weak Ahaz.[1] The destruction of Jerusalem, however, had at last given the Edomites a chance of revenge, and they had indulged it to the uttermost. More cruel than the Chaldees, they had demanded that the city be razed to its foundations.[2] After the final assault, they had eagerly helped to plunder it, and had openly rejoiced when the citizens were carried off into slavery, boasting loudly of their share in the catastrophe.[3] Still worse; they had cut off the retreat of such as had escaped massacre at the storming, and were making their way to the friendly shelter of Egypt. To destroy these, they had beset the southern roads, killing or taking prisoner as many fugitives as possible; the captives being afterwards handed over as slaves to the Chaldeans.[4] Nor had the depopulation of Jerusalem and Judah contented them. They had taken possession of a large part of the Hebrew territory.[5] No wonder that, henceforth, an inextinguishable hatred, deepening with each generation, filled every Jewish bosom at the very name of Edom.[6]

A striking illustration of this deadly abhorrence of the race survives in the short prophecy of Obadiah, the briefest of all the books of the Old Testament. We know nothing of the personal history of the writer, and even the period at which the oracle that bears his name was first uttered, has been disputed. As in the case of Joel, some have fancied him the earliest of the prophets; others, the latest; a lesson enforcing diffidence in historical criticism. That there are various coincidences

[1] 2 Sam. viii. 14. 2 Kings viii. 20. 2 Kings xvi. 6. 2 Chron. xxviii. 17.

[2] Ps. cxxxvii. 7. Jer. xxxv. 11. Lam. iv. 21. Jer. xlix.

[3] Obad. 11–13. [4] Obad. 14. [5] Ezek. xxxvi. 5.

[6] Geikie's *Life and Words of Christ*, vol. i. p. 246.

with Joel may be seen in any reference Bible, and there are passages more or less parallel with others in Jeremiah.[1] But we know how frequently one prophet borrowed from another, sometimes indeed from one whose age and name are unknown,[2] and it is in Obadiah's case a question which was the borrower. The omission of the name of the Chaldeans, or the exile to Babylon, proves nothing in so short a composition, nor can much stress be laid on the position of the book after Amos, in the Hebrew Bible, since Canticles stands next after Job, and Joel, which the new critics allege to be very late, is put before Amos. The balance of probability seems strongly in favour of the prophecy having been uttered by one who had seen the destruction of Jerusalem, and the conduct of Edom which it denounces.[3] Obadiah may have been one of those carried off to Babylon, or possibly he may have been a fugitive in Egypt or in Phenicia; in any case, he seems have been a later contemporary of Jeremiah.

Apart from the malignity shown by the Edomites, at the final crisis of the Hebrew state, there were special grudges between the two races on subordinate grounds. The people of Mount Seir, always vaunting and truculent, stirred the jealousy of their brother-race. They boasted, not without reason, of the wisdom of their great men,[4]

[1] See a reference Bible. [2] See Isa. chaps. xv. and xvi.

[3] Obadiah has been supposed by different critics to have lived before Joel, or under Joash, Jehoram, Uzziah or Pekah; some even assigning him so late a date as B.C. 312. That widely separate centuries should thus have been honoured, shows the utter uncertainty of the subject. But the concurrence of such men as De Wette, Bleek, Rosenmüller and Ewald, in thinking the oracle refers to the fall of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar, is ample vindication for assuming that it does so.

[4] Obad. 8.

and had all the insolence of wealth, secured by the position of their territory in the route of commerce from north to south. The apparent strength of their position, moreover, in a region of lofty and tangled mountains, increased their haughtiness; for their capital, Selah or Petra, lay in a ravine, approachable only by difficult and easily defended mountain passes and narrow gorges.

Their wisdom, prosperity, haughtiness, and fancied security, however, were doomed to a terrible eclipse. Josephus tells us[1] that Nebuchadnezzar, some time after the destruction of Jerusalem, turned his arms against Moab, Ammon, Southern Syria and Edom, and utterly crushed them for the time, though Edom, at least, survived, as a vassal territory, under the Jews and Romans, till after the fall of Jerusalem. Then, at last, the curse of Obadiah and other prophets was fulfilled.

The prophecy opens with an outburst of rejoicing from the remnant of the Hebrews, at the news that vengeance was about to overtake the race they so fiercely hated.

1 We heard a rumour from Jehovah,[2] a messenger was sent among the nations, to say—"Up, let us rise against Edom in war!" 2 "Behold," says Jehovah, "I will make thee small (O Edom) among the nations; thou shalt be utterly despised. 3 The pride of thy heart has deceived thee, thou who hast thy dwelling in the clefts of the rocks; thy seat on the mountain heights;[3] who sayest in thy heart, "Who shall cast me down to

[1] Jos., *Ant.*, X. ix. 7. [2] Obadiah.

[3] The Edomites inhabited the range of Seir—"the rough" hills on the east side of the Arabah, or depression south of the Dead Sea. It stretches south, towards the Red Sea, in a succession of wild granite, porphyry, and sandstone masses, seamed with countless intricate valleys, not even yet explored. Rising steeply on the west, it sinks gradually into the desert on the east. Full of caves, the hills were originally inhabited by the Horites, or cave men, but that race was driven out by the Edomites (Deut. ii.

the ground." 4 If thou wert to soar as high as the eagle, and to set thy nest among the very stars, I will hurl thee down from thence, says Jehovah!

Nothing could resist a foe whom Jehovah had appointed as His instrument. Ordinary raids of plundering tribes might be beaten off, with only a partial loss, but the attack of the terrible Chaldean would bring utter ruin.

5 If a thieving horde[1] came upon thee, or night-plunderers (attracted by thy wealth),[2] they would carry off only as much as satisfied them;[3] but now, alas, how utterly art thou destroyed! If grape-gatherers came on thee, would they not leave some gleanings? 6 But, now, how is Esau searched through in every part! How are his most secret chambers ransacked!

Chaldea would plunder it utterly, nor would it have a friend or ally to help it in its distress.

7 When thy fugitives flee from the invader, to neighbouring friendly states, all these thy allies[4] will drive them back again, within their own borders; the communities at peace with thee[5] will betray thee, turning against thee and overcoming thee; thy

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12, 22). Petra, or Selah, the capital, consisted mainly of dwellings hewn out of the sandstone of the defile in which it lay; the many rich colours of the rock giving the whole place great beauty. Its ruins, if the word may be used, show splendid temples, and a great amphitheatre cut out of the living rock; but these are of a comparatively late period. See vol. iv. pp. 173, 408.

[1] Obad. 5. [2] *Diod.*, xix. 94, 95.

[3] Eichhorn translates these lines: "If thieves or midnight robbers came on thee, how quietly mightest thou have awaited them; would they have stolen more than they could carry off?" Jer. xlix. 9, from which the verse is taken, runs thus in the A.V. "If grape-gatherers come to thee, would they not have some gleaning grapes? If thieves by night, they will destroy till they have enough."

[4] "Men of thy league." [5] "Men of thy peace."

mercenaries[1] will spread a snare for thy feet, but thou wilt not mark it.[2]

The boasted wisdom and martial spirit of Edom were to pass away.

8 Shall it not be in that day[3] says Jehovah, that I will destroy (the wisdom of) "the wise"[4] out of Edom, and understanding from the mountain of Esau? 9 And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed (by the want of counsel), that every man may be cut off from the mount of Esau by the sword.[5]

Their hostility to Jacob—the Hebrew people—has deserved no happier fate.

10 For thy wicked dealing towards thy brother Jacob,[6] shame will cover thee, and thou shalt be destroyed for ever. 11 In the day when thou stoodest over against us, while aliens carried away his substance, and the barbarian pressed through his gates and cast the lot on Jerusalem, (to share its plunder and prisoners), thou wast like one of them. 12 Thou shouldst not have feasted[7] thine eyes on the (evil) day of thy brother, the day of his calamity; neither shouldst thou have rejoiced over the sons of Judah, in the day of their destruction; neither shouldst thou have opened thy mouth bitterly in the day of their distress. 13 Thou shouldst not have pressed through the gate of My people in the day of their trouble, nor have feasted thine eyes on their misery in the day of their calamity, nor have laid thy hand on their substance in the day of their affection. 14 Neither shouldst thou have stood at the crossroads to kill those that had escaped (from the Chaldean), nor have given up the fugitives to their foe, in the hour of their anguish.

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[1] The Heb. has only "thy bread," but "men of" seems to be understood from the preceding clause. By men eating the bread of Edom, only mercenaries can be meant. The passage is very obscure.

[2] Lit., "there is no noticing of it." [3] Obad. 8.

[4] Eliphaz, the chief disputant with Job, was a Temanite. Job ii. 11. Gen. xxxvi. 15, 34. [5] Lit., "by slaughter."

[6] Obad. 10. [7] Lit., "do not."

15 For the day of Jehovah is near for all nations. As you have done, it shall be done to you; your work will be paid back on your own head! 16 For as you, sons of Judah, have drunk[1] the cup of My wrath, on My holy mountain, so shall all the nations drink it henceforth; they shall drink and swallow it down, and be as if they had never been.

Like all the other prophets, Obadiah sees light even in the darkest sky. His people may have been crushed for the time, but they are the heirs of the immortal kingdom of God, and that will, one day, once more, be gloriously established on Zion.

17 But on Mount Zion[2] shall be a place of escape, and it shall be a sanctuary, and the House of Jacob will (once more) enter into their possessions. 18 And the House of Jacob will be a fire and the House of Joseph a flame, and the House of Esau will be stubble (before them), and they shall set it on fire and consume it: Jehovah has spoken.

The Hebrews—both Jacob and Joseph—will be victorious on all sides.

19 And they of the south country—the Negeb—will take possession of the mountains of Esau, and they of the Shephelah—the hill slopes over the maritime plain—will take the land of the Philistines; and they will take the Ephraim country[3] and the land of Samaria, and Benjamin will get possession of Gilead, (beyond the Jordan).

20 And the captives of their host of the sons of Israel (who will then have returned), will take the land of the Canaanites, as far as Sarepta,[4] and the captives of Jerusalem who are at

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[1] Kleinert and Keil render this passage: "For as you (Edomites), have held your carousings on My holy mountain," etc. But this seems hardly so good as the sense given in the text.

[2] Obad. 17–21.

[3] Hill country, *Sept.*

[4] Zarephath = Sarepta—the present Surafend, between Tyre and Sidon, on the coast. 1 Kings xvii. 9.

Sepharad,[1] will take possession of the cities of the south country.[2] 21 And deliverers will rise up on Mount Zion, to judge the mountain of Esau,[3] and the kingdom will be Jehovah's.

Thus spoke Obadiah, repeating in effect, the curse denounced against Idumea by Amos[4] and Isaiah,[5] about 200 and 150 years, respectively, before the Chaldean destruction of Jerusalem. But the indignation in Judah excited by the cruel desertion of the nations pledged to support her in her final struggle, and especially by the base malignity of Edom, stirred the hearts of his brother prophets no less strongly. Jeremiah and Ezekiel, widely apart as they were, felt alike towards the betrayers of their people, and launched equally terrible utterances against them. It is impossible in all cases to fix the exact dates of these prophecies, but those of Jeremiah at least, from his age,[6] must have been spoken very soon after his countrymen had been carried off to Babylon. The doom of Edom, pronounced by him in the name of Jehovah, was terrible.

[1] Sepharad. Graetz would read Arad: a place on the Phenician coast. Keil thinks of Sparta: others, suppose Sardis meant, since it is called Sepharad (C P a R a D) in old Persian inscriptions. But Schrader very justly hesitates to accept this, on various grounds, and looks rather to Babylonia, where the locality may one day be identified. *Keilinschriften*, p. 285.

[2] The Negeb.

[3] The overthrow of Edom by the Chaldeans is implied in Jer. xlix. 7; Ezek. xxxv., comp. Jer. xxv. 9, 21, and Mal. i. 3. John Hyrcanus finally crushed the Edomites and compelled them to submit to circumcision, B.C. 129, Jos., *Ant.*, XIII. ix. 1; Alexander Jannæus subdued the last of their clans (Jos., *Ant.*, XIII. xv. 4.) and Rome finally destroyed the nation. Jos., *Bell. Jud.*, IV. ix. 7.

[4] Amos i. 11. Vol. iv. p. 196.

[5] Isa. xxxiv. 1–17. Vol. iv. p. 405.

[6] Jeremiah was between 60 and 70 at the taking of Jerusalem.

7 Concerning Edom—it began—thus saith Jehovah of Hosts:[1] Is there no longer wisdom in Teman?[2] Has sound counsel perished from the understanding ones? Has their wisdom vanished? 8 Flee! turn! seek the deep caves of your hills for dwellings, (or the depths of the desert), ye inhabitants of Dedan,[3] for I am about to bring on Esau his destruction: the time of his visitation! 9 If grape-gatherers came to thee, would they not leave some gleanings? if a thieving horde, by night, they would take only what they could carry off.[4] 10 But I will strip Esau bare; I will lay open his secret places, so that he shall not be able to hide himself. His seed shall be spoiled, and his brethren, the related tribes, his neighbours, will perish.[5] 11 (Thy men having all been destroyed), leave thy fatherless children (O Edom); I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in Me! 12 For thus saith Jehovah, Behold, those to whom it belonged not to drink the cup (of My wrath—My own people) must drink it, and shalt thou go unpunished? Thou shalt not go unpunished, but drink it thou shalt! 13 For I have sworn by Myself, says Jehovah, that Bozrah[6] shall become a horror, a contempt, a desolation, and a curse, and all its towns shall be perpetual wastes.[7]

The destruction of Edom being a righteous judgment from Jehovah, the prophet goes on to speak of the command to the Chaldeans to invade it as coming from above.

14 I have heard a rumour which is from Jehovah;[8] a messenger has been sent to the nations, saying, "Assemble and come against it; arise to war!" 15 For, lo, I will make thee small among the nations, (O Edom!), and despised among men. 16 The fear of thee,[9] and the pride of thy heart, have deceived thee, O thou

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[1] **Jer. xlix. 7–13.** The resemblances to Obadiah are to be noted.
[2] See vol. v. p. 361.
[3] Vol. i. p. 243.
[4] What was enough, to them.
[5] Lit., "are gone," or "he is gone."
[6] Vol. iv. p. 406.
[7] Dry places, or deserts.
[8] **Jer. xlix. 14–22.**
[9] Lit., "thy terribleness."

who dwellest in clefts of the rocks,[1] and sittest fast on the heights of the hills.[2] Though thou buildest thy nest high as the eagle, I will drag thee down from thence, saith Jehovah, 17 and Edom shall be a fear-inspiring desolation! Every one who passes by it will be dismayed,[3] and will hiss, (in scorn and mockery), at all the strokes it has borne. 18 As Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighbour towns, were destroyed utterly, saith Jehovah, so no man will dwell in Edom any more: no man will sojourn in it.

The ascent of the Edomite hills by the invader is now described.

19 Behold! he will come up (against thy hill cities), as a lion comes up from the thickets of the bed of the Jordan, against the flocks on the rock pastures of the Negeb,[4] and I will make Edom run forthwith (like a scattered flock) from her rocks, and I will appoint over it him who is chosen (by Me). For who is My equal, and who will challenge My doings? And who is the shepherd (or leader of men) who will stand before Me?

20 Therefore, hear the decree of Jehovah, that He has made against Edom, and His purposes that He has purposed against the inhabitants of Teman.[5] Verily, they shall drive them before them—weak ones of the flock as they are! Verily their pasture itself will be dismayed at them.[6] 21 The earth trembles at the noise of their downfall; a cry will rise, the sound of which will be heard even to the Red Sea.[7] 22 Behold, the invader will mount up, and fly, and spread out his wings like an eagle, over Bozrah, and the

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[1] See p. 145. The word for "rock" is Selah—a name of Petra.

[2] Both Selah or Petra, and Bozrah, are at a great elevation above the sea level.

[3] The noun and the verb in these sentences are the same—dismayed may therefore be read "filled with terror, or fear."

[4] Wilton's *Negeb*, p. 43.

[5] Wilton shows, from Josh. xv. 1, that Teman must have been the northern part of the range of Seir, next Judah. *The Negeb*, p. 123.

[6] This passage is repeated in chap. l. 45.

[7] Lit., "The weedy sea." Edom extended to the Red Sea in the days of her glory. 1 Kings ix. 26.

heart of the mighty men, in that day, will be like the heart of a woman in her trouble!

Not less sternly did the curse against Edom sound from the banks of the Chebar. Ezekiel proclaims it in few but terrible words.

12 Thus saith the Lord Jehovah,[1] Because Edom has taken revenge on Judah, and made herself greatly guilty by doing so: 13 Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah, I will stretch out My hand against Edom, and root out man and beast from it, and make it a desert; from Teman (in the north) to Dedan (in the south), they shall fall by the sword. 14 I will carry out My revenge on Edom, by the hand of My people Israel.[2] It will fare with Edom according to My anger and My fierce wrath, and they shall know My revenge! saith the Lord Jehovah.

Edom, however, did not stand alone as the object of the denunciations of the prophets; all the peoples who had betrayed Judah and vented their hatred against her, were alike condemned.[3] Calamities terrible as those of Jerusalem were to come upon all its neighbours in turn.

The doom of the Philistines pronounced by Jeremiah opens with a figure suggested by the great river Euphrates, on which Babylon stood. The awful power of the Chaldeans is compared to an overwhelming flood, coming from the North.

2 Thus saith Jehovah:[4] Behold, waters rise from the north[5] and swell to a flood, overflowing the river banks, and will deluge the open country and all in it, the town and its inhabitants;

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[1] **Ezek. xxv. 12-14.** [2] See p. 148.

[3] Though not expressly stated, it is in itself probable that the Philistines had taken advantage of the sore straits of Judah to gratify their hatred of her. Ezek. xvi. 27-57. Amos i. 6. Isa. ix. 11; xi. 14. Zeph. ii. 5. Obad. 19. Joel iv. 4. Zech. ix. 5.

[4] **Jer. xlvii. 1-7.**

[5] In Isa. xlvi. 8 the same figure is used of the Assyrian army.

and the men will lament aloud; all the people of the land will shriek in terror. 3 At the loud beating of the hoofs of his war-horses, at the bounding of his chariots, at the rattling of their wheels, the fathers, (in their flight), will not look back to their children, (to save them); so terror-stricken will they be[1] 4 because of the day which then comes to destroy all the Philistines, and cut off from Tyre and Sidon every one left to help them.[2] For Jehovah will destroy the Philistines—the remnant of the people who came from Caphtor. 5 Baldness (the sign of mourning)[3] has come on Gaza; Askelon is destroyed, and the rest of the Philistine plain.[4] How long (O Philistia) wilt thou cut thyself (for sorrow!)[5]

6 O thou sword of Jehovah, how long wilt thou not cease?

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[1] Lit., "the powerless of their hands will be such."

[2] The Philistines hired themselves out as mercenaries.

[3] Jer. xvi. 6.

[4] The word is Aimek—a long broad sweep, like the Plain of Esdraelon or the Ghor of the Jordan. The *Sept.* has "the remnant of the Anakim." Num. xiii. 33. Deut. ii. 10. 1 Sam. xvii. 4. 1 Chron. xx. 5–8. For "the Philistine" in the text, the Hebrew has "their."

In vol. i. pp. 247, 355, Caphtor is identified with the island of Crete. Later Egyptian researches have, however, proved that the word means "the greater Phenicia," which, in Egyptian is expressed by the words "Keft ur." From an early period the whole coast of the Delta had been settled by Phenicians, and was hence called by the Egyptians Keft-ur; the Caphtor of the Bible. The Philistines are however often spoken of as Cretans. Ezek. xxv. 16. Though Phenicians, they may have come to the Delta from Crete, from which the name Crethi, apparently applied to them, may be taken. 1 Sam. viii. 18; xv. 18; xx. 7, 23. 1 Kings xxxviii. 44. 1 Chron. xviii. 17. Eber's *Ægypten und die B Mosis*, p. 131. Sayce's *Fresh Light from Anct. Monuments*, pp. 47, 87.

[5] The "remnant" of Philistia, for it is only a remnant, Psammetichus having sorely weakened them by his long siege of Ashdod (*Herod.*, ii. 157), sit in deep grief, like women who pull out their hair, and, in agonizing despair, cut themselves, as was their custom in such cases. Jer. xvi. 6; xlviii. 37.

Back to thy scabbard! Rest! Be still! 7 But how can it rest, since Jehovah has given it a mission against Askelon and the sea coast (of Philistia)? There has He given it its charge!

Far away, in Babylonia, Ezekiel repeated a similar malediction.

15 Thus says the Lord Jehovah,[1] because the Philistines acted revengefully, and wreaked that revenge with foul contempt,[2] to destroy Judah, in their long-standing enmity; 16 Therefore, thus says the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I will stretch out My hand over the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cretans,[3] and destroy the remnant of them that is on the sea-coast. 17 And I will take a great revenge on them with fierce chastisements, and they shall know that I am Jehovah, when I bring my revenge upon them.

Moab, among other kingdoms, was the object of fierce denunciations. Isaiah had prophesied its doom long before, perhaps in the words of a still older seer.[4] Jeremiah, as Balaam, Amos, and others, had done, from the time of Moses, now lifted up his voice proclaiming its approaching destruction. But since the reign of Mesa and the death of Ahab, with a brief interval during the reign of Jeroboam II., the doomed land had enjoyed independence, and instead of paying tribute to the Hebrews had harried their borders remorselessly.[5] Jeremiah now, however, sees it at last utterly destroyed.

1 Respecting Moab;[6] thus says Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel; Woe to Nebo[7] for it is laid waste: Kiriathaim, "the

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[1] Ezek. xxv. 15-17.

[2] The word comes from a root, meaning "to stink."

[3] Lit. Cherethim, or Crethi. 1 Sam. xxx. 14. Zeph. ii. 5.

[4] Isa. chaps. xv. and xvi.

[5] 2 Kings xiii. 20.

[6] Jer. xlviii. 1-8.

[7] Nebo. The highest peak of the Abarim range near the north end of the Dead Sea, but also the name of a town in Moab, or rather in the territory of Reuben (Num. xxxii. 38), held, in the

double town"[1] is put to shame, is taken: Misgab, "the citadel on the height," is put to shame and broken down.[2] 2 The boasting of Moab is gone! In Heshbon they[3] plot evil against the land: "Come, let us cut it off from being a nation"! Thou, also, Madmenah,[4] wilt be brought to silence; the sword will pursue thee. 3 Hark! a cry from Horonaim,[5] "spoiling and huge destruction"! 4 Moab is broken to pieces; the towns, her little ones, cause their cry to be heard to Zoar.[6] They go up the ascent of Luhith with weeping; in the descent of Horonaim the wail is heard over the ruin that has come on them. 5 Flee, save your lives, like him who escapes, naked, to the wilderness. 6 Because thou trustedst in thy strongholds and in thy treasures, thou shalt be taken (in war) and Chemosh,[7] thy god, shall wander forth into captivity; his priests and his princes with him! 7 And the spoiler shall come up upon every town, not one shall

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prophet's day, by Moab. It was taken by Mesa about B.C. 895. The word is derived by Hitzig from the Sanscrit, and rendered by him, "the cloudy heaven;" and hence there was a god Nebo, after whom the town of the name was called. Sayce, however, derives Nebo from Nabi, "a prophet," as if in remembrance of one of the order in ancient times.

[1] Kirjathaim, the modern Kureiyat. The latter, like Nebo, lay on the east edge of the upland plateau, and the two thus stand for the tableland generally.

[2] Misgab = the height, the citadel. De Saulcy writing of the neighbourhood of Kureiyat, speaks of extensive ancient ruins, and a circular enclosure, constructed with very large stones, and crowning the summit of a high cliff. Vol. i. pp. 546–555.

[3] The invading Chaldeans.

[4] A district of Moab famous for its rich soil. Hitzig, 2nd ed., translates "Madmen" as in Isa. xxv. 10, "dunghill"; and makes the clause apply to Heshbon—"yea, to dungheaps wilt thou be brought." The corpses of the slain will lie rotting on the face of the earth.

[5] Lit., "the two caves," a town of Moab.

[6] *Sept. Ewald. Graf.*

[7] The national god of Moab. This being the only god anywhere mentioned in connection with Moab, the nation would seem to have been practically monotheists.

escape; the lowland[1] shall be ruined and the table land[2] be laid waste, as Jehovah has spoken.

9 Give Moab wings[3] that it may fly off and get away, (like a bird scared from its nest), for her cities shall be made an uninhabited desolation. 10 Cursed be he who does the work of Jehovah slackly; cursed be he who holds back his sword from blood. 11 Moab has remained from his youth undisturbed; he has lain still, (in his country, like wine) on its lees; he has not been emptied from vessel to vessel[4]—that is, he has not gone away into captivity (but has enjoyed prosperity), and hence his taste has remained in him, and his fragrance is not changed.[5] Therefore behold days come, says Jehovah, that will send to him those who will turn him on his side (as they do wine jars), and pour him out, emptying his wine jars, and shattering his flagons. 13 And Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the children of Israel were ashamed of Bethel,[6] their confidence.

14 (When it will then happen with you as with the weak and unwarlike) how will you be able to say (any longer), "We are mighty men and strong for war"? 15 Moab is wasted; his cities have gone up in smoke and flame,[7] and his chosen young men are led like sheep to the slaughter-block, says the King, whose name is Jehovah of Hosts.

16 The destruction of Moab[8] is near at hand, his calamity hastens fast. 17 All ye, his neighbours, bewail him, and all ye who know his name say, "How is the sceptre of might broken, the rod of power." 18 Come down from thy glory, thou daughter,

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[1] Aimek—the broad sweeps of valley between hills, including perhaps the Ghor of the Jordan. See p. 153.

[2] The Mishor = upland downs, without rock or stones.

[3] **Jer. xlviii. 9-15.**

[4] To remain on its lees improved wine; to be emptied from vessel to vessel made it tasteless and without fragrance. Its taste and smell were benefited and preserved if it were not poured off its lees.

[5] Moab remained the same in its feelings to other nations—harsh and bitter.

[6] The calf gods of Bethel.

[7] Or "the spoiler has gone up to his cities."

[8] **Jer. xlviii. 16-25.**

inhabitress of (well-watered) Dibon,[1] and sit thirsty on the ground, (captives, waiting to be led away), for the spoiler of Moab shall come upon thee; he shall destroy thy strongholds. 19 Stand out in the road, O inhabitant[2] of Aroer, and look; ask him that is fleeing, and him that has escaped, "What has happened?" 20 Moab is put to shame; yea, it is overthrown; howl and cry; tell it in Arnon that Moab is laid waste! 21 The judgment (of God) has come on the uplands;[3] on Holon and Jahazah and Mephaath, 22 and Dibon, and Nebo, and Beth-diblathaim, 23 and Kiriathaim, and Beth-gamul, and Beth-meon, 24 and Kerioth, and Bozrah,[4] and on all the towns of the land of Moab, far and near. 25 The horn of Moab is cut off, and his arm is shattered, says Jehovah!

The enemy to whom it is committed to carry out the judgments of God is now invoked. He is to hand to Moab the cup of the Divine wrath, and make it drunken, till it reels and falls, the derision of those around.[5] Its pride against Jehovah, in despising Israel, and the vio-

[1] "Ye inhabitants of Dibon." For a notice of the towns mentioned in this prophecy, see vol. iv. pp. 97–103.

[2] Feminine in the Heb. for all the populations.

[3] Lit., "the land of the Mishor." As in verse 8. See vol. ii. p. 374.

[4] Of these towns, Dibon lay three miles north of the Arnon; Aroer on the north bank of the Arnon, so that it was on the boundary between the Hebrew territory and that of Moab, but at this time Moab held a large part of the land formerly enjoyed by the tribes beyond Jordan. Holon is mentioned only here, Jahazah seems to have lain to the east of the country, on the edge of the wilderness, and Mephaath was near it. Beth-diblathaim was perhaps north of Dibon. Beth-gamul is only mentioned here, and its position is unknown. Beth-meon was apparently near Heshbon. Kerioth is a synonym of Ar, or Kir, the old capital of Moab. The plural form Kerioth may imply that it included two or more contiguous towns. Bozrah is not identified. The word means "sheepfolds," a fitting name for small communities on these upland pastures,

[5] See a similar figure, chap. xxv. 15.

lence done to the people of God, by seizing on their inheritance beyond Jordan, and cheering on the Chaldeans in their attack on Jerusalem, have brought on the offender this fierce indignation.

26 Make ye him drunken,[1] for he has acted haughtily against Jehovah; (make him drunken) till he fall into[2] his own vomit, and himself become a derision as he made Israel. 27 Was not Israel a derision to thee, and, yet, was such a fate deserved—as if he had been found among thieves? (Thou couldst not have treated him with more contempt had he been so), for as often as thou speakest of him thou tossest thy head (in scorn).[3] 28 Abandon your towns and make your home in the clefts of the rock, ye inhabitants of Moab, and be like the doves which build their nest at the mouth of the hill caves.[4] 29 We (of Judah) have heard of the pride of Moab, for he is insolent exceedingly—his haughtiness, his arrogance, his lofty airs, and the superciliousness of his heart (are known to us). 30 Even I (also) know his insolence, says Jehovah, and the hollowness of his boasting;[5] the lies that he has uttered. 31 Therefore, (at the thought of the judgment coming on him for these), I shriek in sorrow for Moab, I cry aloud for all its land. There shall be moaning for the men of Kir-heres.[6] 32 O Vine of Sebmah, I will weep for thee more than Jazer will (over the wreck of its homes and vine-

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[1] Jer. xlviii. 26-35.

[2] Lit., "splash into," so as to sound like the beating of the hands.

[3] Matt. xxvii. 39.

[4] Keil translates this phrase, "over the yawning abyss," following Hitzig. But the word for "abyss" is from a root, "to bore through," "to pierce," and thus suits a cave better than a precipice. In verses 43, 44, it occurs three times, and is rendered in each, "*pit*"—apparently a concealed cistern or grain pit. But in the text it must mean a *cave*, since doves breed in such recesses, not in pits.

[5] Or, "babbling."

[6] The chief stronghold of Moab. The Kirhareseth and Kir-haresh of Isa. xvi. 7, 11, also called Kir of Moab and Kirkhu; see the Moabite Stone. Now Kerak.

yards); thy shoots reached over the sea, they reached even to the water of Jazer.[1] The spoiler will fall on thy fruit harvest and on thy vintage. 33 Joy and gladness are taken from the Carmel-like field, so richly fruitful, and from the (whole) land of Moab, and I will cause the wine to fail from the wine-vats; no one will tread them with joyful cry; their shouting will be no shouting for gladness, (but the cry of war). 34 The cry of Heshbon is heard at Elealeh, (two miles off); its voice sounds even to Jahaz;[2] the cry of Zoar reaches to Horonaim and the third Eglath,[3] for even the waters of Nimrim[4] shall be made a waste. 35 And I will destroy from Moab, says Jehovah, him that goeth up to a high-place and burns incense to his gods.

Another outburst of lament over the ruin of Moab follows.

36 For this, my heart wails[5] like mourning flutes, for Moab; my heart wails like mourning flutes, for the men of Kir-hares; for the abundance they had saved is perished. 37 For every head is bald and every beard shaven (in mourning); slashes are cut on all arms in grief,[6] and sackcloth is on the loins. 38 Loud shrieks rise from all the house-roofs[7] of Moab and in her public places, for I have broken Moab in pieces, says Jehovah, like a vessel in which one has no pleasure.

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[1] Sebmah was, according to St. Jerome, only 500 paces from Heshbon. Jazer was 15 miles north of it. "The sea" is the Dead Sea. The fame of the vines of Jazer was widely spread.

[2] Much farther off, to the south-west.

[3] This is Ewald. Graf, and Keil's reading, on the assumption that there were three towns of that name.

[4] "This is a rich verdant spot at the south-east end of the Dead Sea. It still bears the Arab name of Nimeirah, and here, too, we found traces of the leopard."—*Dr. Tristram.* "Nahr Nimrim" means "the stream of the leopards."

[5] Jer. xlviii. 36-38.

[6] "It was a custom among the ancients, and is still common among the Jews, that they cut their arms, etc., in their grief." *Jerome*, on Jer. xvi. 6.

[7] They were flat.

There will be no escape from the destruction!

39 They shall shriek aloud,[1] "Oh! how is our land ruined! How has Moab turned her back with shame!" Thus will Moab be a mockery and a dismay to all his neighbours. 40 For thus says Jehovah, Behold the enemy shall swoop down like an eagle, and spread out his wings over Moab. 41 Kerioth[2] is taken; the strongholds are captured, and the hearts of the mighty men of Moab are become, in that day, like the heart of a woman in her trouble. 42 And Moab will be destroyed from being a people, because he has magnified himself against Jehovah. 43 Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of Moab, says Jehovah. 44 He who flees from the fear shall fall into the pit, and he that gets out of the pit shall be caught in the snare, for I shall bring on him, even on Moab, the year of his visitation, says Jehovah. 45 The fugitives stand, worn out, under the shadow of (the walls of) Heshbon,[3] but fire shall break out of Heshbon, and flame from the midst of Sihon, and will consume the border of Moab and the crown of the head of its haughty sons.[4]

46 Woe to thee, O Moab! The people of Chemosh are lost! for thy sons will be led away captives, and thy daughters to captivity. 47 Yet I will turn again the captivity of Moab in the end of days, says Jehovah.[5]

Ezekiel, on the banks of the Chebar, was equally stern in his denunciation of the doomed land.

8 Thus saith the Lord Jehovah,[6] Because Moab, like Seir, says, "Behold the House of Judah is as the same as all other peoples," 9 therefore, lo, I will open to the inroads of the Sons of the East—

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[1] **Jer. xlviii. 39–47.** [2] See verse 24.

[3] A neighbouring city of the Ammonites.

[4] Lit., "sons of tumult," perhaps = warriors.

[5] This prophecy is more or less adapted from other prophecies. Compare this 48th chap. of Jeremiah with Isa. xv. and xvi.; Amos ii. 1–3; Zeph. ii. 8–10, and the words of Balaam, Num. xxiv. 17.

[6] **Ezek. xxv. 8–11.**

the Arabs [1]—the border of Moab, from the cities on the one end of it, to the last of his cities on the other—the glory of the land—Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon [2] and Kiriathaim,[3] 10 with the country of the Ammonites, and will give it to the invaders for a possession, that the Ammonites may no longer be remembered among the nations. 11 And I will execute judgments on Moab, and they shall know that I am Jehovah.'

In this terrible list of judgments on the enemies of Israel, Ammon was included by both Ezekiel and Jeremiah. The people of God were not to suffer alone. The Divine vengeance would light even more heavily on the heathen, far and near. The word of the Lord, Ezekiel tells us, came again to him, saying:—

2 Son of man, [4] turn thy face against the sons of Ammon and prophecy against them, 3 and say to the sons of Ammon, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Because thou saidst "Aha" against My Temple when it was desecrated, and against the land of Israel when it was laid waste, and against the House of Judah when it went into exile—4 behold, I will, therefore, give thee to the sons of the East—the Arabs—for a possession, that they may set up their tent villages in thee, and make their encampments in thee; and they will eat thy produce and drink thy milk. 5 And I will make Rabbah—thy capital—a browsing place for camels—and the (home of) the sons of Ammon for a gathering place of herds, and ye shall know that I am Jehovah. 6 For thus says the Lord Jehovah, Because thou didst clap thy hands, and stamp (for joy) with thy feet, and rejoice with the deadliest contempt, at (the calamities of) the land of Israel, 7 behold, I will therefore stretch out My hand over thee, and deliver thee

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[1] "Sons of the East," the same as our later word "Saracens." The Arabs would overrun and occupy both Ammon and Moab, as has been the case for ages.

[2] These towns were in the territory of Reuben, but in Ezekiel's day were held by Moab.

[3] Sir G. Grove thinks Kiriatham, not Kiriathaim, was the original form.

[4] Ezek. xxv. 1-7.

for a spoil to the peoples, and root thee out from among them, and destroy thee from among the nations, and thou shalt know that I am Jehovah!

The territory of Ammon lay to the north of Moab, to which its people were closely allied by blood. The tribe of Gad had long before received their country as its inheritance, after the defeat of Sihon their king; but the deportation of the eastern Tribes by Tiglath-Pileser,[1] had enabled them to re-occupy the district, from which, indeed, they had probably never been wholly expelled. Less settled than Moab, the Ammonites had only one city of any size, their capital, Rabbah; the region being generally pastoral. Hereditary enemies of Israel,[2] they would not long have cause for rejoicing at his fall. Like Ezekiel, Jeremiah proclaimed their coming doom.

1 Concerning the B'nai Ammon,[3] thus says Jehovah: Has Israel no sons left? Has he no heirs? Why, then, has Milcom, (the god of the Ammonites), taken the territory of Gad as an inheritance, (instead of Jehovah?) and why do his people dwell in its towns? 2 Because of this, the days come when I shall cause Rabbah of the B'nai Ammon to hear the shout of battle, and it will be made heaps of ruins, and the small towns round it—its daughters—will be burned with fire, and then shall Israel dispossess them that took possession of his territory, says Jehovah. 3 Lament aloud, O Heshbon, for Ai,[4] near thee, is (already) laid waste! Shriek, ye daughters of Rabbah—inhabitants of the little towns near her—gird yourselves with sackcloth; lament, and run hither and thither, behind the rude stone walls of thy

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[1] 2 Kings xv. 29. See vol. iv. p. 233.

[2] Judges x. 7; xi. 12–32. 1 Sam. xi. 2 Sam. x. and xi.; xii. 26. 2 Chron. xx. Amos i. 13–15. 2 Kings xiv. 25. 2 Chron. xxvi. 8. 2 Kings xv. 29. 1 Chron. v. 26.

[3] Jer. xlix. 1–6.

[4] Not the Ai on the west of the Jordan. Graf suggests "Ar" (Num. xxi. 15).

*gadars*,[1] for Milcom (your god) shall go into captivity, and with him his priests and his princes. 4 Why gloriest thou in the glens (of thy land), the wealth[2] of thy (chief) valley, (below Rabbah), O rebellious daughter, who trustedst in (the lasting possession of) thy treasures, saying, "Who will come to me" (to attack me)? 5 Behold I will cause terror to come on thee from all sides, says the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts, and ye shall be driven out, every man straight before him, no one stopping to rally or gather the fugitives. 6 Yet, hereafter, I will turn back the captivity of the B'nai Ammon, says Jehovah.[3]

Damascus, now an inconsiderable state, under we know not what rule, had brought on itself the same doom as its neighbours, for the same cause. Its fate is thus foretold by Jeremiah.[4]

23 Hamath[5] is put to shame and Arpad,[6] for they have heard evil tidings, they are in despair.[7] There is sorrow even on the sea (coast); (like the sea) men cannot rest. 24 Damascus has lost heart and turns to flee, trembling has seized her, anguish and woe like that of a woman in her trouble. 25 Oh! how sad, that the famous, the delightsome city should not be abandoned (by its people) before her fall! 26 Therefore, her young men will fall in her streets, and all her fighting men will be cut off in that

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[1] See vol. iv. p. 218. It is translated in the A.V.—"sheepfolds," "folds," "sheepcotes," "hedges," "wall," and included the dry stone walls used for all inclosures alike.

[2] With Ewald and Graf, I take the participle as a substantive. The Sept has Anakim for Amakim (valleys), and is probably right. A remnant of the old gigantic race may have previously held them.

[3] The Rabbis held that the Ammonites returned when some of their race in later times became proselytes to Judaism. Barclay's *Talmud*.

[4] Jer. xlix. 23-27.

[5] Vol. iii. p. 213; vol. iv. p. 207. Hamath was at one time under the Hittites, as shown by Hittite inscriptions found there.

[6] A city 15 miles north of Aleppo, now Ervad.

[7] Lit., "they melt away."

day, says Jehovah of Hosts. 27 And I will kindle fire on the wall of Damascus, that will consume the palaces of Benhadad.[1]

The various Arab races, settled and nomadic, in the wide regions between Palestine and the Euphrates, are next arraigned and given over to the visitation of God.[2] The denunciation is directed against "Kedar[3] and the kingdoms of Hazor," that is, the Arab villages under different sheiks, "which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon smote." How long the prophecy had been uttered before its fulfilment, we have no means of knowing.

28 Up, (O Chaldeans), march against Kedar, and spoil the sons of the East! 29 They, (the Chaldeans), shall take their tents and their sheep; they shall carry off their tent-cloths,[4] and all their household utensils, and their camels, and shall raise the war shout against them. Fear shall be on every side!

30 Flee! begone as far as you may! bury yourselves in the depth of the desert, O ye inhabitants of Hazor, saith Jehovah. For Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, has formed a purpose

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[1] Amos i. 4, 14. Ben-Hadad = the son of Hadad, the chief god of Damascus; sometimes called Hadad Rimmon, and as such representing Baal, the sun-god—with Rimmon, the god of the air.

[2] Jer. xlx. 28–33.

[3] Kedar is used here as a general name for all the nomadic tribes of Arabs; Hazor for those dwelling in fixed encampments or villages. The settled Arabs are still called Hadarije, in contrast to Wabarije or tent Arabs; and Hadar = Hazor is the fixed dwelling, in distinction from "Bedù," the open desert. Keil, *Jeremia*, p. 490. Delitzsch, *Jes.* xlii. 11. The "men" or "sons of the East" are the Arabs as a whole, (afterwards) known as the Nabateans or Kedarenes.

[4] The thick, felt-like, rainproof coverings of goat's hair or camel's hair, which Paul employed himself in making. *Herzog*, vol. v. p. 514; vol. vi. p. 148. The two under layers of coverings of the tabernacle are described by the word used here. *Herzog*, vol. xv. p. 98.

against you, and planned hostile action. 31 Up, O Chaldeans, march against a people living quietly, in (fancied) security, saith the Lord; who have neither gates nor bars (to oppose you), but dwell alone. 32 Their camels shall be a booty, and the multitude of their herds and flocks a spoil. And I will scatter to all the winds the race that wear their hair shaven at the temples,[1] and I will bring destruction on them from all sides, saith Jehovah. 33 And Hazor shall be a dwelling for jackals, a waste for ever. No one shall live there, no one even sojourn in it.

The last in this list of doomed communities is Elam, the mountainous region on the west of the lower Tigris.[2] The fulfilment of the prophecy, nevertheless, was to be remote; for to Elam, under its king Cyrus, and to Media, was hereafter given the commission to overthrow Babylon.[3] Under the Persian empire, however, its independence was lost, and it became the seat of the Persian capital, Susa or Shushan. It was in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah,[4] that Jeremiah was moved, we do not know on what occasion, to foretell the destiny of this country, which seemed to the Jews almost beyond the limits of the habitable world. The prediction runs as follows:—

35 Thus says Jehovah of Hosts:[5] Behold, I break the bow of Elam,[6] its national weapon, 36 and will bring on it the four winds

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[1] See vol. v. p. 210.

[2] See vol. i. p. 256; vol. v. p. 69. [3] Isa. xxi. 2.

[4] Jer. xlix. 34. The prophecies in chaps. xlvi. to xlix. and xxxiii., had been uttered about seven years before. Jer. xlvi. 2.

[5] Jer. xlix. 34–39.

[6] The national weapon, see vol. iv. p. 440. Sayce thinks that the conquest of Elam referred to was that effected by Teiopes, a chief of the royal clan of the Persians, who appears to have taken possession of Elam during the troublous time that followed the fall of Assyria. The result of this was to make Cyrus an Elamite in education and religion. Sayce, *Fresh Light*, p. 180.

from the four ends of heaven, and will scatter its people to all those winds, and there shall be no nation to which the dispersed of Elam shall not come. 37 And I will make Elam dismayed before her enemies, and before those that seek her life, and will bring evil on them, the glow of My anger, says Jehovah, and send the sword after them till I have consumed them. 38 And I will set up My throne in Elam, and destroy out of it kings and princes, says Jehovah. 39 Yet in the end of days I will bring back the captivity of Elam, says Jehovah.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE MURDER OF GEDALIAH, AND THE SIEGE OF TYRE.

THE state of things in Judah, after the Chaldean army retired, taking with it long files of captives to Babylon, was gloomy in the extreme. Jerusalem and the Temple lay in ruins, the towns and villages had been burned, and most of the surviving population had fled for the time. The land was not, however, finally abandoned; for there still remained inhabitants enough, when the fugitives came back from their hiding places, to form a considerable community, and over these the authority of Babylon must be upheld, to prevent Egypt from taking possession of the country. Nebuchadnezzar, therefore, took measures for the organization of a government in its bounds.[1]

Among the steady advocates of quiet submission to the Chaldeans, a Jewish noble—Gedaliah, "he whom Jehovah has made great"—had borne a foremost part. As a recognition of this he was now appointed governor of the land. He was the grandson of Shaphan, the secretary of king Josiah, and son of Ahikam who had been

[1] The subsequent narrative rests mainly on Jeremiah, chaps. xl., xli., xlii. and xliii.

sent by that king to the prophetess Huldah, to inquire about the newly-found Book of the Law, and to whom, in the days of Jehoiakim, Jeremiah owed his life.[1] Gedaliah had been no less faithful to the best traditions of the past, or to Jeremiah, their greatest living representative. The opinions of the statesman and the prophet were identical, alike in religion and politics, and thus drew them together. To both, the perjury of Zedekiah in his rebellion against Babylon, was the cause of the misery that had overwhelmed the nation; and both might be implicitly trusted to be loyal to Nebuchadnezzar.

The state of parties in Jerusalem had been intimately known to the Chaldeans, and hence the storming of the city, which had overthrown the State, was the signal for Jeremiah recovering his freedom. In return for his firm support of Chaldea, orders were issued to the general in command at Jerusalem, to take him under his protection and show him every favour. He was at once, therefore, removed from confinement in the court of the watch, and commended to the good offices of Gedaliah, though free to go where he liked. Led first to Ramah, the Chaldean headquarters, about five miles north of Jerusalem, and so far on the way to Babylon, the manacles hitherto on his wrists were there struck off, and he was invited to choose whether he would go with honour to Babylon, or remain behind in his ruined native country. Knowing, however, that if he went to the East he should never see Judah again, he preferred to remain amidst scenes which, even in their desolation, were so near his heart. Gedaliah had taken up his abode at Mizpeh, a little south of Ramah, and to him the prophet turned, receiving, from the Chaldean general, when he left him,

[1] Jer. xxvi. 24. 2 Kings, xxii. 12.

besides other substantial proofs of regard, a supply of provisions, necessary for his support till the next harvest.

A better day seemed now dawning. The restless Egyptian party was in exile, and Gedaliah had every quality his position seemed to demand. All the population not carried off were committed to his charge, and the feeble remnant of the nation might hope slowly to regain a modest prosperity by his aid, under the shadow of the Great King.

The news of this new settlement of affairs soon spread. An amnesty, which promised the best results, had been proclaimed to all who gathered round Gedaliah. Numbers of men throughout the country had formed themselves into armed bands, to harass the Chaldeans during the siege, but had been forced to flee to the fastnesses of the distant hills—to Edom, Moab, and Ammon—after the city was taken. Further resistance was hopeless. Their leaders, therefore, gladly sent in their submission and that of their followers, to the new governor, himself a Jew, in answer to his overtures of protection and oblivion of the past, if they proved henceforth loyal subjects of Nebuchadnezzar. They might settle where they liked in the half-depopulated country, taking possession of the abandoned orchards, vineyards, and fields. A great many, attracted by such offers, flocked in from all sides.

Among other leaders of these rude bands, however, was one destined to ruin the fair hopes of the community. Ishmael—ominous name—a connection of the old Hebrew royal family, possibly even a descendant of Elishama, the son of David,[1] but perhaps a son of Zedekiah or one of the later kings—was still the head of a company which, after the siege, had taken refuge in Ammon. Women from that district were found in the royal harem

[1] Jer. xli. 1. 2 Kings xxv. 25. 2 Sam. v. 16.

at Jerusalem,[1] and thus Ishmael, on his mother's side, may have been connected with the Ammonite court. Jealous of the elevation of Gedaliah, and familiarised by the war with deeds of blood, Ishmael was a ready tool for any crime glossed by ambition or a show of patriotism, and ere long agreed with Baaltes, the king of Ammon, to assist in carrying out a dark plot against Gedaliah. To kill him probably seemed to the Ammonite the surest way of bringing final ruin on the hated Jews, who, if allowed to recover themselves, might once more claim the territory beyond the Jordan. That he had consented to take office under the Chaldean, was, perhaps, the pretext by which Ishmael hushed his scruples. A plot was accordingly arranged, by which Ishmael should go to Mizpeh and feign submission to the new governor, with a view to his murder; and unfortunately the frank and open nature of the intended victim made it only too easily successful.

Gedaliah's house seems to have stood by itself, shut off by a high wall, with a courtyard enclosing the deep well, or reservoir, dug three hundred and fifty years before, by Asa, to supply water to his stronghold raised at Mizpeh against Baasha.[2] Hither Ishmael and some of his men repaired, after various leaders with their bands had already done so, and, like them, he doubtless took an oath of allegiance to the Great King, pledging himself to be his loyal subject. Free access to the governor was naturally granted to chiefs who had thus given in their adhesion to the new state of things; but this confidence, though justified by the conduct of all but

[1] 2 Kings xi. 1.

[2] 1 Kings xv. 16–22. 2 Chron. xvi. 1–6. The stones had been brought from Ramah, and the fortress was designed to bar the road to Jerusalem.

Ishmael, gave him a fatal opportunity of carrying out his treason. Hoping to win other leaders to join him, he broached the subject to them, but they determined to thwart the black design if possible. Two brothers, Johanan and Jonathan, both prominent chieftains, with Seraiah, at the head of a band from Netophah, a little north of Bethlehem; and Jaazaniah, from Maachah, in the far north, near the springs of the Jordan,[1] waited on the threatened man and warned him of his danger. But Ishmael had played his part too well, and had lulled his victim to a false security. "It was impossible such a man could be false; they slandered him." A secret interview obtained by Johanan was as unsuccessful. Knowing the ruin Gedaliah's death would bring, he offered to kill the conspirator secretly, but permission was refused.

Ishmael arrived about a month after the fall of the city, to pay homage to Gedaliah, but had subsequently left again for Ammon.[2] He reappeared, however, thirty days later, on the third[3] of Tisri[4]—nearly our October—with ten "princes" or "dignitaries,"[5]—perhaps officers of the disbanded Jewish army—each, probably, attended by his followers. New adherents so high in rank seemed a great acquisition, and were naturally welcomed by the governor in a feast made on their account; but it was a fatal act of courtesy. The unsuspecting victim was liberal, as Josephus tells us, with his wine, and all went merrily, till, at a given signal, he and every one in the mansion were struck down by Ishmael and his confederates; the massacre being carried out with such swift secrecy that no alarm was given outside, and no

[1] Conder's *Handbook*, p. 254.
[2] Jos., *Ant.*, IX. x. 3.
[3] So says tradition.
[4] Jer. xli. 1. Zech. vii. 5.
[5] Rabbai.

one escaped to tell the tale. The grey-haired Jeremiah, often a guest at Gedaliah's table, was fortunately absent. So complete had been the preparations, that a guard of honour of Chaldean soldiers, on duty round the house, were surprised and cut down to a man, and the residence made a ghastly scene of death, without the townspeople, outside, having the least suspicion of any treason, till two days after all was over. But the crimes of Ishmael were, as yet, only half finished. The houses of Mizpeh, built on a hill-side, stood high above the country around; that of Gedaliah rising clear of the others, perhaps on the highest terrace, so that it overlooked the road from Shechem and Samaria to Jerusalem. Watching from this vantage ground, Ishmael, on the second day, saw a band of travellers approaching. As, whatever their errand or destination, it would be incumbent on them to wait on the governor and pay him their respects, it seemed imperative to make away with them, lest the massacre should be discovered. The traitor, therefore, hurried out at the head of his band to meet them. They proved to be eighty pilgrims from Shechem, Shiloh,[1] and Samaria, on the way to the ruins of the Temple at Jerusalem, which were still sacred to them; God-fearing descendants of the Ten Tribes, living among the heathen settled in their land by Esarhaddon.[2] They wished to show their unshaken faith and devotion, by presenting unbloody offerings, such as did not need a priest, on the loved spot where the altar of Jehovah had stood.[3]

The destruction of the nation and of the sanctuary had overwhelmed them with grief; their beards were shaven, their clothes rent, their flesh cut, in heathen fashion,[4]

[1] Salem. *Sept.* and *Graf.*
[2] 2 Kings xvii. 24. [3] 2 Chron. xxx. 11; xxxiv. 9.
[4] The modern Dervishes sometimes, under religious excitement,

and they were weeping aloud as they went.[1] Approaching with hollow sympathy, Ishmael invited them to pay the wonted visit to the governor, and thus drew them into his power. Once inside the courtyard[2] of the residence, the gates were closed behind them, and seventy out of the eighty were forthwith massacred; ten, only, ransoming their lives by the promise of a heavy payment in wheat, barley, oil and honey, which, they told him, they had stored in pits unknown except to themselves. The seventy corpses were then thrown into Asa's well in the courtyard, which offered a ready-made grave, as the bodies of our countrymen and countrywomen were to be tumbled into the well of Cawnpore twenty-four centuries later.[3]

Blind hatred or jealousy of Gedaliah had urged on the author of this hideous tragedy, which made any mercy from the Chaldeans impossible for him and his associates. He and they had wreaked a furious and mad vengeance on Gedaliah and all connected with him, as the penalty, at the hand of Jewish irreconcilables, for having had any peaceful relations with Babylon. It only remained to secure a safe retreat to Baaltes, across the Jordan. But the town could not be allowed to escape a visitation. Descending to it, therefore, Ishmael and his men seized

cut their cheeks and brows, arms and breasts, stripping themselves to the waist to do so. Jeremiah speaks of the practice more than once. Thus in chap. xvi. 6, we read of men "cutting themselves," and in chap. xlviii. 37, "on all hands are gashes." In every case this wounding one's self is intended as a sign of grief, either in contrition or for some great affliction.

[1] *Sept.*

[2] Not city. The word for courtyard, and that for city, are very much alike in Hebrew.

[3] Jehu appears to have acted in the same way with the forty-two relatives of Ahaziah. 2 Kings ix. 14.

all the inhabitants they could—including the daughters of Zedekiah, who had been sent by Nebuchadnezzar to Mizpeh, as a place of safety—and carried them off, with the other prisoners, to Ammon. Reports of the murder of Gedaliah and his household had, however, at last spread abroad, or it may be that only the news of the carrying off so many citizens from Mizpeh had become known. More or less of the terrible story very soon reached Johanan and the chiefs associated with him, who had vainly tried to put Gedaliah on his guard. Starting at once with their bands in pursuit, they overtook the prisoners and their captors at the great tank or pool of Gibeon,[1] about two miles north of Mizpeh,[2] for such a company could move only slowly. The sight of the pursuers was life to their victims. Aiding the attack of Johanan by rushing off from their guards, they were soon in safety, and Ishmael had to flee, leaving two of the ten leaders of his band slain on the field, and doubtless many of his men.

It was useless to return to Mizpeh, which in all probability had been burnt. Those rescued comprised men, women, children, and some of the eunuchs of Zedekiah's harem, and could not be left unprotected. Johanan and his companions did not live at Mizpeh,[3] and its very name was now, for the time, a horror. Besides, the Chaldean troops still in Palestine and Syria would inevitably sweep down at once in wild fury on the scene of such an au-

[1] Its remains are still to be seen, showing that it was about 120 feet long by 100 broad. *Robinson.*

[2] Josephus says, that Ishmael went south, by Hebron. Thomson says, that there is a "considerable pond" in the plain below the village, in the wet season. *Land and Book*, p. 669. This may be "the sea" alluded to in Josh. xviii. 14, as the north-west corner of Benjamin.

[3] Jer. xl. 13.

dacious and terrible crime, and might confound the innocent with the guilty in their revenge. It was therefore determined, as a first step, to retire southwards, with the view of fleeing to Egypt, if necessary. A large khan, built by Chimham, the follower or son of Barzillai, the friend of David, stood near Bethlehem, and was the starting point for travellers to Egypt. Accommodation could be found in it, and leisure gained for consulting as to the next steps to be taken. Thither, therefore, they hurried.

GUEST HOUSE. *From a sketch made by Lieut. Conder, R.E.*
See also vol. v. p. 206.

Among the fugitives was the prophet Jeremiah and his faithful attendant Baruch. In such an emergency it was natural to turn for counsel to one so venerable. If, said they, he would favour them by asking directions from God for their guidance, they would faithfully act on them. Their request met with immediate compliance, but it was ten days before he felt able to give them any answer. When at last it came, moreover, it was not

such as they had hoped to receive, and they had not faith enough in the prophet to act boldly on it. Safety, he told them, lay in their remaining in Judea; disaster would follow their flight to Egypt. It had been a mistake even to think of it; nor had they been sincere in their request that he should inquire for counsel from God, as their resolution had been already formed. It was useless for him to warn them to remain in the country. Overcome by terror, and already determined on a particular course, they were immovable. Jeremiah, they said, had been prompted by Baruch to speak as he had done, that the Chaldeans might seize them and carry them off as slaves to Babylon. Orders were therefore given to make for Egypt, and thither the last fragment of the Jewish commonwealth accordingly went, carrying Jeremiah with them. Sixteen miles from Pelusium, the frontier Egyptian town, lay Tahpanhes, or Daphne,[1] where there was a garrison, under Psammetichus I., for defence against the Arabs and Syrians. There they settled for the time.

Jeremiah still, however, adhered to his gloomy forebodings, after his arrival in this new home. Taking "great stones," he buried them in sight of his countrymen beneath the mortar with which a pavement of bricks, from a kiln near at hand, was being laid down before the local palace of the Pharaoh, following the act by announcing:—

10 Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts,[2] the God of Israel, Behold I shall send and fetch Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, My servant, and set up his throne over these stones that I have buried, and he will spread out his carpet of state over them.

[1] The present Tel Defenneh. Ebers, in *Riehm*, p. 1605.
[2] Jer. xliii. 8-13.

11 And he will come and smite the land of Egypt—those for death to death; those for captivity to captivity; those for the sword to the sword. 12 And I will kindle fire in the houses of the Egyptian gods, and he shall burn the temples and carry off the gods captive, and he shall wrap the land of Egypt round him as a shepherd wraps round him his mantle,[1] and he shall march away in peace, (no one molesting him). 13 And he will break the obelisks[2] of Bethshemesh, the house of the sun,[3] in the land of Egypt, and he will burn the houses of the gods of the Egyptians with fire.

The fulfilment of this prediction, as we shall see, followed in due time.

The flight of Gedaliah's community to Egypt extinguished the last remaining spark of life in the Jewish State. The work of the ten centuries since Joshua crossed the Jordan had been undone. Every Hebrew looked back with boundless pride to the empire of David; but the sceptre had now fallen from the hands of his descendants, after they had held it for five hundred years, and his people had no longer a country. The Ten Tribes had been in exile for more than a century, though Assyria, which carried them off, had been overthrown. A great

[1] "The shepherd boy, twelve or fourteen years old, had bare legs and feet, a grey smockfrock, with a loose sash round his waist, and the woollen coverlet *in which he wraps himself by night*, thrown over his shoulder like a scarf." Bovet, *Egypt*, vol. ii. p. 248. Neil explains the figure differently: "The shepherd wears over his shirt of unbleached calico, in wet or cold weather, a thick, warm, sleeveless, sack-like outer garment of camel's hair, invariable as to material, shape, and colour—brown, with perpendicular stripes. Nebuchadnezzar will array himself with the land of Egypt—that is, seize its spoils—as easily as a shepherd puts on this loose simple garment."—*Palestine Explored*, p. 254.

This illustrates vividly the dress of John the Baptist and of the prophets: it was that of a poor peasant.

[2] Matzaiboth = sacred pillars.

[3] *Heliopolis* or *On*. See vol. ii. p. 17.

part of Judah and Benjamin had fallen in battle, or siege, or by the other miseries of war; part had been led off in chains to Chaldea, and a remnant had made Egypt their home. Henceforth, there seemed little human hope that they would ever again take root in the land given by God to their fathers. The murder of Gedaliah had broken the continuity of their national life, and violently closed their history for the time. Slowly realized, the greatness of this disaster impressed itself deeply on the people at large. A public fast was appointed on the anniversary of Gedaliah's death, and has ever since been observed. The consciousness that all the nations around rejoiced at their ruin, deepened the bitterness of humiliation. As in all ages since, the Jew had made himself universally hated. Ammon, Moab, Edom, Damascus, the Philistines, the very Arabs of the desert, both settled and nomadic, and the haughty Phenicians of the north, clapped their hands at the downfall of Jerusalem. It needed all the consolation of knowing, from the prophets, that these nations would suffer in their turn, to make the situation endurable. Egypt, however, received the exiles kindly. Jewish colonies had already settled in it,[1] and were being constantly strengthened by immigrants from many parts, for, already, members of the "dispersion" were found in all countries, east and west. Palestine itself contributed many, besides those who fled with Johanan and his companions. Troubles soon followed Gedaliah's death; leaders rising who sought to shake off the Chaldean yoke; for the bulk of the humbler classes of the nation still remained in the land, the better classes and the artizans, mainly, having suffered deportation. Six years after the fall of Jerusalem, local insurrections led to Nebuchadnezzar sweeping off seven hundred and forty-

[1] Jer. xxiv. 8.

five more captives to Babylon—doubtless all picked men—and many others, we may be sure, had to flee to their brethren in Egypt.[1] By these successive reductions of the population, Judah was, at last, left almost a desert. "The holy cities were a wilderness: Jerusalem a desolation."[2] The land could now enjoy her sabbaths.[3] To make matters worse, in the south, the Edomites seized a part of the country, extending their borders to the sea-coast, with or without permission from the Chaldeans.

The disturbances in Judah after the murder of Gedaliah may have been connected with the presence of the Chaldeans in Phenicia, Nebuchadnezzar having begun the siege of Tyre in B.C. 586;[4] two years after the fall of Jerusalem. This great military enterprise had been the subject of a series of discourses by Ezekiel, delivered to the exiles on the Chebar, shortly before it was undertaken, when the triumph of the arms of Babylon over the Jews had left its armies free to turn to the long-threatened capital of Phenicia. The word of Jehovah, the prophet tells us, came to him, saying:—

2 Son of man,[5] because Tyre says respecting Jerusalem, "Ha! the gate of the nations is broken in pieces;[6] the stream of people and of trade is turned to me; I will be filled, (now that) she is laid waste." 3 Therefore, thus says the Lord Jehovah, Behold I come against thee, O Tyre,[7] and will cause many people to flood

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[1] Jer. lii. 30.
[2] Isa. lxiv. 10.
[3] Lev. xxvi. 34, 43. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21.
[4] 586–573. Richm.
[5] Ezek. xxvi. 1 6.
[6] Men from all parts entered the gates of Jerusalem to worship at the Temple. Or it may mean, the trade that passed through them from many parts.
[7] Insular Tyre is meant. Not the old city on the mainland The channel between the two was 1,200 paces broad, and not very deep.

up against thee, as the sea brings up its waters, wave upon wave. 4 And they shall destroy the walls of Tyre, and break down her towers. I will also scrape away her very dust and make her a naked rock. 5 She will be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea, for I have spoken, says the Lord Jehovah, and she will be a spoil to the nations. 6 And towns and villages, her "daughters," subject to her on the mainland, shall be slain by the sword, and they shall know that I am Jehovah.

7 For thus saith the Lord Jehovah;[1] Behold I will bring against Tyre, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, from the North; the king of kings, with horses and chariots and horsemen, and a

MODERN TYRE.

great host and much people. 8 He will slay thy daughters in the open country by the sword,[2] and he will raise besieging towers against thee, and cast up a mount against thee,[3] 9 and raise a tortoise[4] against thee. And the blow of his battering

[1] Ezek. xxvi. 7-14.

[2] The smaller towns on the mainland.

[3] Vol. iv. p. 335.

[4] A structure covered with hides, or made of linked shields, under protection of which the besiegers sought to undermine or dig through the wall. *Riehm*, p. 436. Or, it may mean a cover of shields linked together, beneath which the besiegers approached the walls. *Hävernick. Ewald. Hitzig. Keil.*

ram will he direct against thy walls, and break down thy towers with his crowbars. 10 The dust raised by his horse will cover thee, by reason of their number; thy walls will shake at the noise of the horsemen, the wheels, and the chariots, when he enters thy gates as they enter into a breached and conquered city. 11 He will stamp with his horses' hoofs in all thy streets, he will slay thy people with the sword, and cast down thy grand Baal-pillars to the ground. 12 And they will plunder thy wealth, and carry off thy merchandise, and break down thy walls, and destroy thy lordly mansions, and cast thy stones and thy timber, and the rubbish of thy houses, into the midst of the sea.[1] 13 Thus will I hush the voice of thy songs, and the murmur of thy harps will be heard no more. 14 And I will make thy site a bare rock; thou wilt be a place for the spreading of nets, and wilt never be rebuilt; for I, Jehovah, have spoken, says the Lord Jehovah!

Assyrian Embroidered Robes.

The news of the destruction of Tyre will shock all the princes of maritime lands, far and near, and all the Tyrian colonies on the mainland of Africa and Europe, and in the islands of the Mediterranean.

15 Thus saith the Lord Jehovah to Tyre:[2] Verily, at the report of thy fall the coast lands will tremble—when the dying groan in thee, when slaughter is in thy midst! 16 And all the princes of the sea will come down from their thrones, and lay aside their robes, and put off their embroidered garments, and clothing

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[1] Nebuchadnezzar tried to make a mole to the island city across the arm of the sea between it and the mainland. He was not however successful in this, but Alexander the Great, who afterwards carried out the same idea, found the water shallow where the Chaldean king had thrown the wreck of the city into the waves. Arrian, *Anab.*, ii. 18.

[2] Ezek. xxvi. 15-18.

themselves with fear will sit (in lamentation) on the earth, and will tremble unceasingly and be appalled respecting thee. 17 And they will raise a song of lament for thee, and say to thee, "How hast thou perished, who wast frequented by all the sea people, the renowned city which was mighty in the sea, thou and thy citizens, who caused the fear of her to rest on all the sea nations. 18 How shall the coast lands tremble in the day of thy all; the islands of the sea be dismayed at thy destruction!"

Tyre, swallowed up by the waves of the sea, will sink into the kingdoms of the dead, and vanish for ever from the earth.

19 For thus saith the Lord Jehovah,[1] when I make thee a desolation, like the cities that are not inhabited; when I bring the deep over thee, and many waters cover thee, 20 I shall hurl thee down to them who have descended to the grave, to the people of old time, and make thee dwell in the under world, in the eternal desolations, with the dead who have gone down to the grave, that thou mayest be no more inhabited; and I will create a new glorious power in thy place, in the land of the living.[2] 21 I will give thee up to utter destruction, and thou shalt cease to be; though men seek for thee thou shalt never be found more, says the Lord Jehovah.

A second oracle paints the glory of the great city under the figure of a ship of its own magnificent merchant navy, which floated on every sea, as that of Britain does in our own age.

All the earth had contributed towards the construction and outfit of the splendid vessel. Its rowers and crew were the most skilful and the bravest, but to the dismay of all men, when it sailed out on the high seas, it was wrecked by a tempest from the east. This striking figure is varied by the introduction of a description of Tyre itself, its trade and wealth; but as much of the

[1] Ezek. xxvi. 19-21. [2] Israel?

chapter[1] has already been quoted elsewhere,[2] only the prophetic picture of the shipwreck needs be given here.

25 Tarshish-ships[3] were thy caravans[4]; they carried thy merchandise (O Tyre), and thus thou wast made exceeding rich and glorious in the midst of the sea. (But) thy rowers have brought thee out on the high sea,[5] and the east wind has broken thee up in the midst of the ocean. 26 Thy riches, thy merchandise, thy goods for exchange, thy sailors, thy steersmen, thy ship-carpenters, the traders who sell and buy thy cargo,[6] and all the fighting men in thee, even all the multitude on board, have sunk in the waters, in the day of thy shipwreck. 28 The coasts tremble at the wild cries of thy steersmen, 29 and all that ply the oar, all sailors, all steersmen of sea-going ships, (thinking no one safe, since thou hast perished), leave their ships and get to the firm ground, 30 and wail aloud for thee, (in their terror and sorrow), and weep bitterly, and throw dust on their heads, and strew themselves with ashes, 31 and shave themselves bald for thee, and gird themselves with sackcloth, and weep over thee in sadness of heart, with bitter wailing, 32 and in their sorrow[7] raise a song of lament for thee—"O what city was like Tyre, like her that is made silent in the midst of the waters!" 33 When thy wares were borne from sea to sea, thou didst supply the wants of many peoples; thou enrichedst the kings of the earth with the wealth of thy exports and thy wares; 34 but now thou art reduced to ruins and buried in the midst of the waves; thy goods and all thy people in thee have sunk into the depths of the waters! 35 All the inhabitants of distant coasts will be thunderstruck at thy calamity, their kings will tremble exceedingly, their countenances will fall. 36 The traders of other lands will mock[8] at thee, because thou hast perished suddenly,[9] and hast vanished for ever.

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[1] **Ezek. xxvii. 1-24.** [2] Vol. iii. p. 351-2.

[3] Great merchantmen, like our old "Indiamen," or more modern "clippers." [4] **Ezek. xxvii. 25.** [5] Ps. lxxvii. 19.

[6] = Our supercargo, who manages all the commercial affairs of a trading voyage.

[7] "Thy sons" = colonies, *Eichhorn*. The words are very nearly alike. [8] Lit. "hiss." [9] Ps. lxxiii. 19.

In another discourse anticipating the victory of Nebuchadnezzar, Ezekiel, as the siege advanced, dwells again on the approaching catastrophe, the very idea of which was as terrible in the ancient world as that of London being razed to the ground would be in our day. Ithobaal II.[1] was now reigning in Tyre, and is addressed by the prophet as personifying his subjects. The pride and haughtiness of his dynasty made him a fit mark for stern denunciation; for, like many lines of ancient kings, it claimed descent from the gods, if, indeed, each monarch did not arrogate personal divinity.[2] But ruler and people will perish together. The word of Jehovah, says Ezekiel, came again to me, as follows:—

2 Son of man,[3] say to the king of Tyre—thus says the Lord Jehovah: Because thy heart is lifted up with pride, and thou hast said, "I am a god, and I sit throned as one, in the midst of the seas," though thou art a man and not God, and because thou thinkest thy wisdom divine, 3 and boastest that thou art wiser than Daniel,[4] so that no secret can hide itself from thee: 4 and that thou hast gained thy power by thine own wisdom and understanding, and by them gathered gold and silver unto thy treasuries; 5 that it is by thy supreme skill in trading, moreover, that thy might has grown so great, and because thine heart is lifted up at thy riches:

6 Therefore thus says the Lord Jehovah, Because thou thinkest thy understanding like that of a god, 7 I will bring the barbarians[5] upon thee, the fiercest of the nations, and they will draw their swords aginst thy sun-like wisdom, and profane thy divine lustre, 8 and hurl thee down to the grave, and thou shalt die like a common man, slain in the midst of the waters. 9 Wilt thou say "I am a god," before him who slays thee, though thou

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[1] Jos., *c. Ap.*, i. 21.

[2] Ezek. xxviii. 2.

[3] Ezek. xxviii. 2-10.

[4] The new critics evade this allusion to Daniel by saying it refers to some unknown worthy of a former age!

[5] Lit., "stranger, foreigner."

art a man and no god to him who takes thy life? 10 Thou shalt die the death of the uncircumcised, by the hand of barbarians,[1] for I have spoken, says the Lord Jehovah.

Ere long the prophet sees him lying slain, and raises the death lament over him. The strophes are keenly sarcastic in their tone, recounting the lofty pretensions of the king, and describing him as a radiant cherub, covered with gold and precious stones, and set on the mount of God in Eden, but falling into sin, and driven from Paradise to find a miserable end.

12 Son of man[2]—said the voice in his breast—raise a death song on the king of Tyre and say to him: Thus says the Lord Jehovah, O thou seal and keystone of the Tyrian States, closing up its perfect arch; full of wisdom and perfect in beauty! 13 Thou didst dwell in Eden, the garden of God, and wast decked with all kinds of precious stones, the sardine, topaz, diamond, chrysolite, onyx, jasper, sapphire, carbuncle, beryl, and with the gorgeous golden robes made by thy workmen for the day of thy coronation![3] 14 I set thee as a broad-winged cherub on the holy mount of God; thou walkedst within the stones of fire, (which

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[1] The Phenicians were apparently circumcised,* and in this lies the sting of the prophet's words. They imply that he would have no lament raised for him, and that his corpse would be left unwashed, undressed with grave-clothes, and perhaps unburied—the deepest indignity to any one, far less to a king, in ancient times.

[2] **Ezek. xxviii. 11–19.**

[3] This passage is very dark. Keil translates it "the service of thy tabrets and of thy wives was with thee; on the day when thou wast created (king) were they ready." The drums or tabrets are held to be an allusion to the state and glory of his accession; the wives, to his inheriting the harem of his predecessor. I have followed the rendering of Eichhorn mainly. The *Sept.* reads, "With gold thou hast filled thy treasures and store-houses."

* Movers in *Ersch und Gruber*, vol. iii. pp. 24, 431. *Herod.*, ii. 104.

guarded the sacred spot, around, with a flaming wall).[1] 15 From the day of thy elevation[2] thou wast blameless in thy ways till guilt was found in thee.[3] 16 Through the greatness of thy commerce thy soul[4] was filled with evil, and thus thou sinnedst. Therefore I will cast thee out of the mount of God, and will destroy thee,[5] O guardian cherub, from within the walls of flaming stones. 17 Thy heart lifted itself up proudly, because of thy prosperity.[6] Thou hast spoiled thy wisdom through thy glory corrupting thee; I will hurl thee to the dust, I will make thee a sight before kings. 18 Through the multitude of thy sins, in thine unrighteous trading, thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries;[7] therefore I will cause fire to burst out of thy midst, and it will devour thee, and reduce thee to ashes on the earth, before all who see thee. 19 All that know thee among the nations shall be horrified at thee; thou shalt be a terror to them and shalt cease for ever.

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[1] "I set thee beside the cherub on the holy mount of God, thou wast in the midst of the flaming stones."—*Sept.*

This seems to be a poetical introduction of the Eastern mythical conception of "the mount of the assembly (of the gods)," Isaiah xiv. 13, the Olympos of the Accadians, by whom it was called "The Mountain of the East." Its peak was the pivot on which the sky rested, and hence it was known, also, as "The Mount of the World." It lay far away to the north-east, and was the supposed entrance to the lower world.

[2] Lit., "creation."

[3] The whole passage is an imaginative parallel of the Prince of Tyre with Adam. Eden, the cherubs, the creation in innocence, and the Fall, all indeed that is recorded in the opening of Genesis, were thus familiar in the days of Ezekiel, a fact to ponder in connection with the new criticism.

[4] Treasuries.—*Sept.* Lit., "inner parts."

[5] The covering cherub has driven thee, etc.—*Sept.*

[6] Lit., "beauty."

[7] The Tyrian State is conceived as the Paradise on the Mount of God, to which the prince was the protecting cherub. Its sanctuaries he had defiled by the sins of his great mercantile city.

Sidon, which was closely related to Tyre, could not expect to escape the storm of war which had burst on the great city. An oracle, therefore, announces its fate also.

21 Son of man[1]—said the Divine Voice—set thy face against Sidon and prophecy against it, 22, saying, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold I am coming against thee, O Sidon: and will glorify Myself on thee, that men may know that I am Jehovah, when I execute judgments on her, and have shown My holiness in her. 23 I will send pestilence into her and blood into her streets, and the slain shall fall in her by the sword, which shall press in on her from every side, and they shall know that I am Jehovah.

The prophet closes the long roll of denunciations of the heathen nations round Israel, by an assurance of God's favour to His ancient people, to cheer them in their humiliation and exile.

24 There shall thus be no more a thorn to prick thee, or a spear to pierce thee, of all (the nations) round thee, that despised thee, but they shall know that I am the Lord Jehovah.

A promise to the exiles, that God would bring them back again to their own land, after the destruction of the enemies, who now trampled over them, concludes this oracle.

25 Thus says the Lord Jehovah: When I gather the House of Israel from out of all the nations among whom they are now scattered, and shall have shown Myself holy in them, in the sight of the heathen, then shall they dwell in their land which I gave to My servant Jacob. 26 There they will dwell in safety, and build houses, and plant vineyards, and live in peace, when I have executed judgments on all that despise them round about; and they shall know that I am Jehovah their God.

The siege of Tyre, by Nebuchadnezzar, had begun very soon after the fall of Jerusalem. Unfortunately our in-

[1] **Ezek. xxviii. 20-26.**

formation respecting it, though it lasted thirteen years, from B.C. 586 to B.C. 573, is very scanty. It is thrice mentioned by Josephus,[1] but he does not speak of the result. The silence of the Syrian historians on this point, is, however, a striking proof that it must have ended ingloriously for their city. If the defence had been successful, it would assuredly have been loudly proclaimed. But though Nebuchadnezzar took the city, it appears, from a passage in Ezekiel,[2] that he did not give it up to pillage, and thus gravely disappointed his soldiery, who had counted on sacking it, as a compensation for the toils and danger[3] of the prolonged siege. Possibly a treaty may have been made, securing its being spared the horrors of storming and plunder, in consideration of such humiliating conditions of heavy tribute as were familiar to the Phenicians in similar conjunctures. Egypt, indeed, is said by Ezekiel[4] to be given to the Chaldean monarch as a reward for having done against Tyre what Providence had designed. But if Jerome be right, it is not necessary to suppose any compromise. "Nebuchadnezzar," he tells us,[5] "when he besieged Tyre, and could not bring up his rams, towers, and tortoises, because it was surrounded by the sea, ordered the vast multitude of his army to carry stones and materials for a mole, and having filled up the narrow interval of sea (between it and the mainland), made a continuous path to the island. The Tyrians seeing this now completed, and perceiving that the foundation of the walls were being shaken by the blows of the battering rams, carried off in ships, to various islands, whatever was valuable in the shape of gold, silver or goods, so that when the city fell, Nebu-

[1] Jos., *Ant.*, X. ix. 1. *C. Ap.*, i. 19, 21.
[2] Ezek. xxix. 17–20.
[3] *Movers*, p. 448.
[4] Ezek. xxix. 20.
[5] Hier. in *Ezek. ad loc.*

chadnezzar should find no reward for his labours." There is evidence, moreover, that Tyre was henceforth ruled by princes strictly tributary to Babylon, some of them being even sent from the Chaldean capital.[1]

But though Tyre was thus taken, as Ezekiel had predicted, his prophecy that it would be razed to the ground till its site became a bare rock, on which men would spread their nets, proved to refer to a later period. Nor is it wonderful that this should be so, since the time of the fulfilment of their prophecies is expressly said to have been withheld from the seers divinely inspired to utter them.[2]

[1] Fragment of Menander, quoted by Josephus, *C. Ap.*, i. 21.

[2] 1 Peter i. 11. For the ultimate fall of Tyre, see vol. iv. p. 340. The dam, built by Alexander the Great, has been increased by the sand thrown up by the sea, to a broad isthmus. On this stands the Tyre of the present day, a place of from 3,000 to 4,000 inhabitants, which does not deserve the name of a town. The houses are mostly mud huts, and the streets crooked and filthy passages. The rubbish of the old city covers the ground for nearly two miles outside the present town gate. The harbour is so sanded up and filled with the wreck of the ancient city, that only small boats can enter. Part of Tyre is under the sea; much of it beneath the ground. For many feet deep, the soil is a mass of building stones, shafts of pillars and fragments of marble, etc. Thus has Tyre become "a heap of ruins"—a bare rock in the sea on which to spread nets, for the sheds and shelters now raised on part of its ancient site, offer no contradiction to the terrible decree that it should never be rebuilt. Rob., *Pal.*, vol. iii. p. 670. *V. de Velde*, vol. i. p. 145.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE JEWISH COLONIES IN EGYPT.

WHILE Nebuchadnezzar was detained year after year in Phenicia, the immigration of Jews to Egypt steadily increased, till colonies were formed not only at Tahpanhes, but at Migdol, twelve miles from Pelusium, at Noph or Memphis in the Delta, and in the land of Pathros, which was the name for Upper Egypt generally, and especially for a quarter of Thebes and the country round it.[1] Exile from their country had not improved them. Instead of seeking Jehovah, they went back to the idolatries of their fathers, refusing to listen to Jeremiah, though recognised as a true prophet. Taking advantage, therefore, of a great gathering of his people at an idolatrous festival in Upper Egypt; the aged seer once more warned them of the ruinous consequences of such a course.

2 Thus says Jehovah of Hosts,[2] the God of Israel—cried he—
ye have seen all the evil that I have brought on Jerusalem and all
the towns of Judah; behold they are desolate to-day, without an
inhabitant, 3 because of their wickedness which they did, to
provoke me to anger by going (to idols), to burn incense (before

[1] Pathros, in *Riehm*. See **Jer. xliv. 1.**
[2] **Jer. xliv. 2-14.**

them), and serving other gods which neither they nor their fathers knew. 4 I sent you all my servants, the prophets, sent them eagerly and constantly, and caused them to say to you: "Oh, do not this abomination, which I hate." 5 But they would not listen or incline their ear, to turn from their wickedness, and not burn incense to other gods. 6 Then my indignation and my fierce wrath poured itself forth, and flamed throughout the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem, and they were turned into desolation and loneliness, as they now are. 7 And now, says Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel: Why do ye commit so great wrong against yourselves, (in the face of such warnings), by acting in a way that must end in cutting off man and woman, child and suckling, from Judah, leaving you no survivors to preserve your name? 8 Why do ye stir me to wrath by your conduct in burning incense to strange gods in the land of Egypt, to which ye have come for a time—to draw down on yourselves destruction, and cause yourselves to be made a curse[1] and a contempt to all the nations of the earth?

9 Have ye (already) forgotten the wickedness of your fathers, and of the kings of Judah and their wives,[2] and your own wickedness and that of your wives, which they committed in the land of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem? 10 Yet they are not penitent[3] (for all this), even now, and have neither feared my law and my statutes that I set before you and your fathers, nor walked in them. 11 Therefore says Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel: Behold I set my face against you for evil, to cut off all Judah. 12 And will sweep away the remnant of it who have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt, to live there for a time. They will be destroyed and fall in Egypt; they will perish, small and great, by the sword and by famine, and will become a curse, an astonishment, an execration, and a scorn. 13 For I will punish them that dwell in Egypt as I punished Jerusalem, by sword, famine and pestilence. 14 Very few of the remnant of Judah who have gone into Egypt, to dwell there awhile, shall

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[1] Men would imprecate a similar fate to theirs, on those towards whom they wished evil.

[2] Heb., "*his* wives" = the wives of each. The *Sept.* has "his princes," which is adopted by Ewald and Eichhorn.

[3] Lit., "bruised."

escape or survive, to go back to the land of Judah, whither their souls yearn to return; only a handful of fugitives will do so.

But Jeremiah's appeals and threats were equally vain. Among the great multitude he addressed, no voice was lifted in favour of a return to Jehovah. In the idolatrous festival they had gathered to observe, the women took a leading part, contrary to the custom, which forbade their sex mingling in public with men; and so far from confessing guilt, they were ready to defend their conduct.[1]

16 "With respect[2] to what you have told us in the name of Jehovah," said their representative, "we shall not listen to you. 17 We shall do what we please, burning incense to the queen of heaven,[3] and pouring out drink-offerings[4] to her, as we have done in the past, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem; for then we had plenty of food and were prosperous, and saw no trouble. 18 But since Josiah's days, when we left off burning incense to the queen of heaven, and pouring out drink-offerings to her, we have been in want of everything, and have been destroyed by sword and famine.

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[1] The words (Jer. xliv. 15) "All the people that dwell in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah," illustrates the similar expression in the Pentateuch, that all the people assembled before Moses and were addressed by him. The meaning in both cases is, that a great number, who in a manner represented the whole, were present.

[2] Jer. xliv. 15-19.

[3] The moon, or the planet Venus. Jer. vii. 17, 18; see vol. v. pp. 32, 36. The goddess Astarte, was the personification of the moon (Baudisson, in *Herzog*, 2te Aufg., vol. x. p. 216); or perhaps, Venus, as the star that leads the moon to her husband, the sun (Baudisson in *Herzog*, 2te Aufg., vol. i. p. 721). In either case, the moon was "the queen of heaven." But it is a question whether Astarte, whom the Jewesses so devoutly worshipped, was the moon or Venus. The supposition that she represented the latter, has led Venus to be supposed "the queen of heaven," by some.

[4] Drink-offerings of wine.

19 Moreover, when we women burn incense to the queen of heaven, and pour out drink-offerings to her, we do so with the full knowledge of our husbands,[1] both as to our making cakes in her image, [2] and pouring out offerings to her."

To this Jeremiah promptly replied, that though the national misfortunes were thus ascribed to the prohibition by Josiah, of moon-worship and other idolatries, they were rather the result of the re-introduction of these superstitions, with their inevitably attendant moral corruption.

ISTAR, ASTARTE; or Ashtoreth, For another figure of the goddess, see vol. v. p. 34.

21 How?[3] Has Jehovah then forgotten your often repeated offering of incense, burned in the towns of Judah, by you, and your fathers, your kings, and your princes? Have they not rather sunk into His heart, 22 so that Jehovah could no longer bear you, because of the evil of your doings and the abominations ye committed, and is it not on their account that your land is now desolate and a curse, and without an inhabitant? 23 Yes! it is just because you have burned incense and sinned against Jehovah, and have not obeyed the voice of Jehovah, nor walked in His laws, statutes and testimonies, that the evil ye now endure has come upon you.

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[1] Num. xxx. 6, 7.

[2] A Phenician sacrificial tariff, found lately in Cyprus, mentions as one item of the temple accounts, "For two bakers who baked the cakes for the (holy) queen (of heaven)."

[3] Jer. xliv. 20-23.

But their past and present sufferings were not all they would suffer for their apostasy from Jehovah. Still worse was to follow.

24 Hear the word of Jehovah,[1] all Judah, who are in the land of Egypt. 25 Thus says Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel: Ye and your wives, (before me), have carried out with your hands (now bearing sacred cakes for the moon goddess) the words of your lips, when ye said, "We shall assuredly pay the vows we have made, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and pour out drink offerings to her." Perform your vows by all means; fail not to do so! 26 But hear the word of Jehovah to all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt: Behold, I have sworn by My great name, says Jehovah: Verily it shall no more be uttered by any man of Judah in all Egypt, saying, "As the Lord Jehovah lives;" 27 for, behold I will watch over them to do them evil, not good, so that all the men of Judah that are in Egypt shall perish by the sword and famine, till they are all gone. 28 For they that escape the sword and return out of Egypt to Judah will be very few, and all the remnant of Judah that have come to Egypt, to sojourn in it for a time, shall know whose word shall stand, Mine or theirs. 29 And that ye may know that My word spoken against you to your hurt shall be carried out, let this serve as a sign to you, says Jehovah: 30 Behold I will give Pharaoh-Hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies[2] and into the hand of those who seek His life, as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, his mortal foe.

The ruin of the Egyptian king under whom the fugitive Jews had taken refuge, became from this time a frequent subject with the two prophet-exiles, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, in the valley of the Nile and on the banks of the Chebar.

Tyre had been besieged by Nebuchadnezzar only as a step towards the conquest of Egypt, now the great ally

[1] Jer. xliv. 24–30.

[2] He was murdered by Amasis, as will be seen hereafter.

of the Phenicians against Babylon as, in former times, against Assyria. Till the great trading city was humbled, it would have been perilous to invade the valley of the Nile; but the determination of the Great King to follow up the submission of Tyre by marching against Pharaoh, was not concealed. The question of supremacy in Western Asia must be finally settled. As to the issue, it could hardly be doubtful, for the legions of Egypt could not hope to resist the terrible hosts of Chaldea, under a king who was the greatest general of the age. It would not excite surprise, therefore, when Jeremiah, always the opponent of the Pharaoh, and loyal to Babylon, made the announcement, as the siege of Tyre drew near its end, that the Chaldean would come and smite the land of the Nile.[1]

While the inevitable overthrow of the kingdom of the Pharaohs, by Nebuchadnezzar, was thus proclaimed in Jerusalem and in Egypt itself, Ezekiel sounded its doom from the banks of the Chebar. Already, before the fall of the Holy City, he had foreseen and repeatedly announced the conquest of the Nile Valley as the certain issue of that monarch's campaigns in Syria.[2] Tyre on the mainland had yielded to the Chaldean arms almost at the same time as the capital of Judah,[3] and the island city of Tyre, which afterwards made so long a defence, alone resisted his arms in Syria. The Great King had awaited at Riblah the fall of Jerusalem, before beginning this final effort, little dreaming it would task his resources as it did.[4] Yet the issue could not be doubted by the

[1] Jer. xlvi. 13. [2] Ezek. xxix. 1–16; xxx. 20–26; xxxi. 1–18.

[3] Rüetschi in *Herzog*, 2te Auf., Art. Nebucadnezar. Jer. xxvii. 51, 59. Ezek. xxxii. 30.

[4] Fall of Jerusalem, B.C. 586; siege of Tyre, B.C. 585–572.—*Rüetschi.*

kingdoms which had fallen, one after the other, before the great conqueror. The thirteen years of the siege were partly utilized to chastise the refractory peoples of Palestine—Ammon, Moab, Edom, the Philistines, and Damascus, with the Arabs round [1]—thus fulfilling the predictions of the prophets against these nations; but their subjugation, and that of insular Tyre, were only steps towards the ultimate conquest of Egypt, the ancient rival for the dominion of Western Asia.

The siege had hardly commenced before Ezekiel destroyed the last hopes of the Egyptian faction in Babylonia, by renewing his warning, that Pharaoh, so far from being able to help Judah, was doomed.

2 Son of man [2]—said the Divine Voice to him about the beginning of B.C. 584 [3]—raise a lamentation [4] for Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and say to him; Thou wast like a young lion among the nations; thou wast like a great crocodile in the waters (of thy land); thou dashedst through thy streams,[5] and troubledst the waters with thy feet and tossedst up [6] their floods.[7] 3 Thus says the Lord Jehovah: I will spread out My net over thee by the help of many nations, and they shall draw thee out (of thy waters) in My net.[8] 4 And I will cast thee down on the land; I will sling thee out on the face of the open ground, and make all the birds of heaven light and stay on thee, (to devour thee), and I will fill the wild

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[1] Ezek. xxv. Jos., *Ant.*, X. ix. 7. [2] Ezek. xxxii. 1-16.

[3] Twelfth month of the twelfth year of the Captivity. Smend says, March, B.C. 584. [4] As over the dead.

[5] By a very slight emendation, Ewald renders this clause, "thou tossedst up (spray) through thy nostrils." See Job xli. 20. But does the crocodile cast spray out of its nostrils? Yet, in a poetical way the figure may refer to the water dashed up before him in his onward rush.

[6] Lit., "didst tread." [7] Same word as "streams."

[8] The two words for "net" are different, but their distinctive features are not known. The last word comes from a root "to enclose"

beasts of the whole earth with thee. 5 And I will strew thy flesh on the mountains round, and fill the valleys with thy foul carcase. 6 I will also soak the land in which thou swimmest, even to the mountains, with the gushing out of thy blood; the torrent-beds[1] will be filled with it. 7 And when I quench thy light, I will darken the heaven and its stars; I will veil the sun with clouds and the moon will not give her light. 8 All the shining lights in heaven will I make black over thee, and pour darkness over thy land, says the Lord Jehovah.

9 I will trouble the heart of many peoples when I publish thy destruction among the nations, in lands which thou hast not known. 10 I will paralyse many peoples with fear through thy fate; their kings will shake with terror at it, when I brandish My sword before their eyes; and they will tremble continually, each for his own life, in the day of thy fall. 11 For thus says the Lord Jehovah; The sword of the king of Babylon will smite thee. 12 By the swords of mighty men—the fiercest of the nations, all of them—will I overthrow thy multitude; and they will lay waste all that lifts itself up proudly in Egypt, and all its multitude will be destroyed. 13 And I will destroy all its cattle from beside its many waters,[2] so that no foot of man nor hoof of beast shall trouble these waters more. 14 After that I will make them settle and grow clear,[3] and their canals flow like oil, says the Lord Jehovah. 15 Then, when I have made the land of Egypt a desolation, and it is stripped of its abundance, when I have smitten all that dwell in it, they will know that I am Jehovah.

16 This is the lamentation that they will raise; the daughters of the nations shall chant it; they will sing this dirge for Egypt, and for all her multitude, says the Lord Jehovah.

A fortnight later[4] Ezekiel returned to a subject so engrossing. He sees the teeming population of the Nile

[1] The Aphikim, lit., "swift rushes of water." In Egypt they could only refer to the canals. [2] Canals, etc.

[3] The Nile fertilizes Egypt by its black mud, whence it is called "The black." Ezekiel poetically sees it become a clear flowing stream in the Messianic times.

[4] On the 15th, doubtless of the twelfth month, though the copyist has omitted to give the number.

Valley overwhelmed by Nebuchadnezzar. The conquest of any power or kingdom in those days was its virtual extinction; like its sons slain in battle, the State itself might be said to have gone down to the grave. Egypt, therefore, crushed by the Chaldean, is seen in Sheol; a companion, now, of the shades of mighty empires that had passed away before her. Their presence is her only miserable consolation.

17 The word of Jehovah[1]—says the prophet—came to me thus: 18 Son of man! lift up a wailing for the multitude of Egypt, and cast her down, like the daughters[2] of (other) famous nations (before her), into the underworld, to them that have already descended to the grave! 19 Art thou any fairer than others? Get thee down, and lie (dishonoured) among the uncircumcised.[3] 20 The Egyptians shall fall among those slain by the sword! It is already given (to him who shall use it!) Draw down Egypt and all her multitudes (to the shades of the grave, ye powers of the underworld)! 21 The mighty heroes (already in Sheol), say from its depths, of Pharaoh and his supporters, (now with themselves): "They have come down hither, there they lie, the uncircumcised, slain with the sword"?[4]

The great kingdoms of the past, visited for their sins, like Pharaoh himself, are already in the underworld, and greet him when he enters it, to lie down in the grave among them, with all his host.

22 Asshur is there in Sheol, with all its host; its king, surrounded by the graves of his people, all of them slain, pierced by the sword. 23 Their graves are made in the depths of Sheol,

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[1] Ezek. xxxii. 17-32. [2] Population.

[3] "Uncircumcised" was the lowest word of contempt in the mouth of a Jew.

[4] And hence without honourable burial. "Uncircumcised" is used as equivalent to "vile," "degraded," "unclean," because not purified by funeral rites.

those of his host round that of the Great King; all slain, pierced by the sword that caused terror in the land of the living.

24 Elam is there and her whole multitude, round the grave of its king; all slain, pierced by the sword, gone down, uncircumcised, to the underworld: they who spread terror in the land of the living, now bear the shame of death with those already lying in the grave. 25 They set Elam a bier in the midst of the graves of her hosts, all of them round about her, all of them uncircumcised, slain in battle; for though they spread terror in the land of the living, they now lie humbled among those already in the grave. Elam is laid in the midst of the slain!

26 Meshech and Tubal [1] the fierce Scythian tribes, with all their multitude, are there; their graves round about that of their chief; all of them uncircumcised, slain in battle—they who spread terror in the land of the living! 27 They lie not with the heroes of the uncircumcised, gone down to Sheol with their weapons of war, their swords laid under their heads,[2] but their iniquities have come on their very bones, because they were a terror to the valiant in the land of the living.

28 Thou, also, (O Egypt,) shalt lie shattered among the uncircumcised, with them that are slain by the sword!

29 Edom lies there, her kings, and all her princes, mighty as they were, laid among them, slain by the sword, with the uncircumcised and those gone down to the pit!

30 There lie the princes of the North of Syria and Phenicia—all of them, and all the Sidonians, gone down to the shades of the slain; terror-inspiring once, brought to shame now! They lie, uncircumcised, among those slain with the sword, bearing a common shame with the rest of the dead!

31 All these will Pharaoh see (when he goes down, like them, to Sheol), and take better comfort to himself (at the sight of them), for the slaughter of all his host, (now gathered around him, there once more, as pale ghosts), for Pharaoh and all his army will be

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[1] Vol. i. p. 230–233; vol. v. pp. 164 ff. Sayce says the Scythians came from the steppes of Southern Russia. Others think of the regions behind Caucasus. *Fresh Light*, p. 155.

[2] Burial of the weapons of war with the dead was common in antiquity, as it is now in some uncivilized countries. Virgil, *Æn.*, 6, 233. *Arrian*, i. 5. *Diod. Sic.*, xviii. 26.

slain in battle, says the Lord Jehovah. 32 I put the terror of him into the hearts of men in the land of the living, but, (for all that) he will be stretched out among the uncircumcised, with them that are slain by the sword; Pharaoh and all his host, says the Lord Jehovah.

Thus sang the prophet in the year B.C. 584, nineteen months after the fall of Jerusalem. The years that followed saw the Chaldean forces straining every nerve to conquer insular Tyre. Nebuchadnezzar triumphed after his thirteen years' siege; but, as we have seen, the city, though taken, was spared.[1] The cup of its iniquity was not yet full, and its utter overthrow was delayed to a later age. But the fate of Egypt was sealed by the submission of Tyre. Now tributary to the Great King, and no longer a source of danger in his rear, he was free to march to the Nile. Thither, therefore, his victorious legions advanced, in the fighting season of the year B.C. 572 or 571, immediately after the siege of the Phenician capital was ended. Fourteen or fifteen years had passed since Ezekiel's former predictions, that Pharaoh would be defeated, but though his dirge and that of his host had been sung on the Chebar so long before, the

[1] It is satisfactory to note that Winer, *Realw.*, vol. ii. p. 638 and Hitzig, *Jes.*, p. 273, *Ezech.*, p. 227, speak of Nebuchadnezzar as having taken insular Tyre. Some of the new critics take for granted, from Ezek. xxix. 18, that the siege had failed; but if it had, the Chaldean king could not have marched on to the conquest of Egypt. It must have been successful, though the city was spared the horrors of a sack. No cuneiform record of the campaigns of Nebuchadnezzar against Judah and Tyre has yet been discovered; but a curious inscription, carved by his orders on the rocks of the Dog River, about eight miles north of Beirût, came to light about two years ago. Unfortunately, it is much worn, and the best preserved passage speaks only of the famous wines of Lebanon and Helbon.

rophet's faith in the ultimate result had never been haken.[1] When Tyre at last fell, he returned to the ubject. On the first day of the seven and twentieth ear of Jehoiachin's captivity,[2] and of his own, the word f Jehovah, he tells us, came to him saying :—

18 Son of man,[3] Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, has made his rmy go through hard service against Tyre; every head is bald nd every shoulder rubbed bare (with pushing the war machines nd such like toil), and neither he nor his host has had any return rom the city, for their toil in besieging it. 19 Therefore, thus ays the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I give over the land of Egypt to im (as a recompense), and he will carry off its wealth and seize s spoils and plunder its booty, and this will be the reward of is army. 20 I have given him the land of Egypt for his service gainst Tyre, because his host were working for Me, says the ord Jehovah. 21 In that day I will make a horn shoot forth to he House of Israel, and I will open thy mouth in their midst,[4] nd they will know that I am Jehovah.

Egypt had filled a great place in the foreign relations f the whole reign of Nebuchadnezzar. Just before his ccession, while Crown Prince, he had fought the great attle of Carchemish, which expelled Pharaoh Necho rom Western Asia. In 587, he had been disturbed uring the siege of Jerusalem, by the attempt of Pharaoh Necho to relieve that city; and during the siege of Tyre, Egypt had apparently aided the Phenicians. A burning hirst for revenge was thus kept alive in the bosom of he Great King, and this fact was doubtless known widely.

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[1] The date of the prophecies in Ezek. xxix. 17-21 and xxx. -19, must have been about B.C. 571, seventeen years after the ll of Jerusalem.

[2] B.C. 598 – 27 = 571.

[3] **Ezek. xxix. 17-21.**

[4] A Messianic time will follow, in which the prophet, justified y the fulfilment of his prediction, will be able to speak more eely than in the hostile past.

Alike on the Nile and on the Chebar, the threats of the Babylonian conqueror must have been constantly discussed in the colonies of Hebrew exiles, so long zealous partisans or opponents of Egypt. It was natural, therefore, that the prophet-preachers of the day should often recur to the subject. Hence, perhaps the latest utterance of Ezekiel which we possess, reverts to it once more. In the thirtieth chapter of his Book, he tells us that the word of the Lord came again to him, apparently soon after the prediction last quoted, foretelling the excitement that would be felt, even in Ethiopia, on the news of the downfall of Egypt and its allies.

2 Son of man[1]—said the Divine Voice—prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Wail aloud! "Alas for this evil day!" 3 For the day is near, the day of Jehovah, a day of dark clouds! the time (of the judgment) of the heathen! 4 The sword will come on Egypt, and trembling on Ethiopia, when the slain fall in Egypt, and the enemy carries off its wealth, and its very foundations are destroyed. 5 The contingent of Ethiopians, the men of Phut,[2] the men of Lud, and all the mixed tribes of desert allies, the Lybians[3] (fighting in their ranks), and all the vassal peoples[4] shall fall by the sword.

All the allies of Egypt will be destroyed, and the country laid desolate.

6 Thus says Jehovah: All the supports of Egypt will fall,[5] and its proud might will sink. From Migdol on the borders of Palestine, to Syene, far south, on the cataracts of the Nile, they shall fall by the sword, says the Lord Jehovah. 7 Egypt will

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[1] Ezek. xxx. 1-19.

[2] Sayce thinks Phut was the Egyptian Punt, on the Somali coast. *Fresh Light*, p. 47.

[3] Ewald has "Nubians."

[4] Lit., "sons of the covenant."

[5] The idols, princes, strong cities, and warriors. See vers. 13, 15, 17.

be desolate in the midst of desolate lands, and her cities waste in the midst of waste cities. 8 And they shall know that I am Jehovah, when I kindle a conflagration in Egypt, and all her supporters[1] are destroyed. 9 On that day, messengers sent off by Me, will start in swift Nile boats, to alarm the Ethiopians dwelling in fancied security, and terror will seize them when the day of Egypt arrives, for, lo, it comes!

Nebuchadnezzar has been chosen by God to carry out the Divine purposes, and the ruin he will inflict will be terrible.

SYENE (ASSOUAN) DURING THE OVERFLOW OF THE NILE.

10 Thus says the Lord Jehovah: I will make an end of the hum of men in Egypt, by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. 11 He and his people with him—the fiercest of the nations—will be brought to destroy this land; they will draw their swords against Egypt, and fill the land with the slain. 12 And I will dry up the Nile canals, and give the land into the hand of a rapacious soldiery,[2] and lay it and all that is in it waste, by the hand of barbarians; I, Jehovah, have spoken!

A fuller rehearsal of the sorrows that will befall the doomed land follows.

13 Thus says the Lord Jehovah: I will destroy the blocks of wood they call gods, and root out the worthless idols from Mem-

[1] Lit., "helpers."

[2] This is the meaning of "selling" it to "the wicked."

phis,[1] and (for the time) there will be no more a prince of the land of Egypt, and I will spread fear throughout its borders. 14 And I will make Pathros—that is, Upper Egypt—desolate, and will kindle a conflagration in Zoan-Tanis—in Lower Egypt—and will execute My judgments in No-Amon—or Thebes, the capital of Upper Egypt. 15 And I will pour My fury on Pelusium—or Sin, the frontier fortress of the land, (on its north-east border), and I will cut off the multitude of Thebes. 16 And I will kindle a conflagration in Egypt; Pelusium will tremble greatly, and Thebes be captured, and Memphis stormed in the daytime. 17 The young men of On[2] or Bethaven—the head quarters of idolatry—and of Bubastis, will fall by the sword, and the population of both cities will be led off into captivity. 18 At Tahpanhes the day will be darkened when I break the supports of Egypt there, and make an end of her haughty pride; a cloud will cover her, and the towns—her daughters—will be led off into captivity. 19 Thus will I execute judgments in Egypt, and they shall know that I am Jehovah.

The fulfilment of these successive prophecies was strikingly complete. Nebuchadnezzar seems to have been compelled to turn his arms for a time in some other direction, after the fall of insular Tyre, before marching against Egypt. According to Greek writers, Pharaoh Hophra used this interval to fit out a great fleet, built on the then famous Greek model, and manned by Ionians and Carians, and sent them to Phenician waters, to stir up, if possible, a rising against the Chaldeans, so as to keep them from the Nile Valley. Weak on the land, Hophra seemed more likely to be successful by sea, as the Chaldeans were indebted, in naval matters, chiefly to allies. His only measure of defence in his own territories was to fortify and strongly garrison the frontier town Pelusium,[3] trusting to its detaining the Great

[1] The special seat of the worship of Ptah and Apis.

[2] Heliopolis, Bethaven, "House of Nothingness." Aven and On, in Hebrew, have the same consonants; a change of vowels only making the difference.

[3] Ezek. xxx. 15.

King by the slowness of a siege, while the Egyptian navy was busy in his rear. But the Phenician cities, demoralized by recent defeat, were not disposed to embroil themselves again with Nebuchadnezzar. He had razed continental Tyre to the ground, and might do the same with other towns, if they rose against him. Their fleets, therefore, instead of joining that of Egypt, sailed over to the neighbouring Cyprus, and united with the navies of the petty kings of that island. Following the enemy thither, however, Hophra's ships won a great victory over the combined fleets, and then sailing back to the Phenician coast, took the city of Sidon by storm, and gave it up to plunder. On this, the other coast towns hastened to submit to Hophra, and recognised him as their over-lord; a dignity he retained for three years. In striking corroboration of this, remains of Egyptian structures, bearing the Pharaoh's name as their builder, are still found at the coast towns of Gebal, the ancient Byblos, and Arvad, the ancient Arados.

Elated by such prosperity, Hophra fancied himself "the happiest king that ever lived," and insanely vaunted that even "the gods could not overthrow him." But the dissipation of his dreams was terrible! Hearing of his successes, the Lybian shore tribes, harassed by Greek colonists on their soil, appealed to him as their natural protector, and in his vanity he undertook their deliverance. As he could not, however, trust his Greek mercenaries against their own countrymen, he sent native soldiers on the expedition, which proved an utter failure. The Egyptians were so disastrously defeated, that very few of them returned to Egypt. Mourning filled the land, and indignation against Hophra became loud and threatening. The priests and native soldiery, who, alike, hated him for his partiality to Greek mercen-

aries, whispered that "he had sent the Egyptian army to Lybia to get rid of it." The sight of the straggling and wretched survivors at last roused a wide and fierce revolt, which he sought to quell by ordering his chief general Ahmes against the rebels. The troops, however, no sooner saw him, than they elected him king, and forced him to march against the Pharaoh. Opposing him at the head of thirty thousand mercenaries, Hophra might reasonably have expected victory; but the enthusiasm of the foe was irresistible, and the royal army was routed, the king himself being taken prisoner, and shut up in his palace at Sais, by the conqueror. This, however, would not satisfy the populace. Clamouring to have the unfortunate monarch given up to them, they at last gained their point, and at once strangled him.

The account given by Josephus is different. According to his authorities, Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt, and having dethroned Hophra, set up Ahmes in his place, and this is substantially corroborated by various Egyptian and Babylonian inscriptions. The governor of a province of Southern Egypt, in those years, living at Elephantina almost as a petty king, had erected, among other memorials of himself, a statue, recently discovered,[1] on which is the following inscription.[2]

"His Majesty (Hophra) invested me with a very high dignity, that of his eldest son, making me governor of the regions of the south, to drive back invaders." The magnificent gifts this fortunate personage had made to the gods and the priests of his province, and the temples he had built, are then recounted, and he proceeds, "I set up my statue that my name might endure for ever, by its means, for I protected the temple of the gods

[1] Now in the Louvre.

[2] I have somewhat condensed the language.

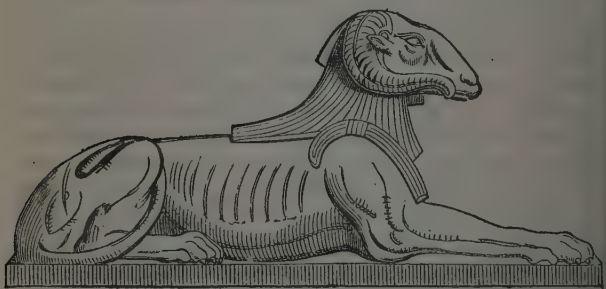
when it suffered from the foreign soldiery of the Amu,[1] the people of the north and those of Asia—the wretches who had evil in their heart, for they purposed to overrun and ravage Upper Egypt. They carried out the plans their hearts had conceived."[2] He adds, that he kept the invaders from getting beyond the first cataract, and drove them back on Hophra's army, by which, he affirms, they were defeated, though this was doubtless a diplomatic flattery to Egyptian feeling. The facts seem to be, that the native soldiery actually revolted, and that Nebuchadnezzar was thus enabled to overthrow Hophra more easily. Yet his army, as we see from this inscription, marched as far south as the first cataract, thus literally fulfilling the prediction of Ezekiel,[3] that he would waste the land in its whole length from Migdol to Syene. But the Great King not wishing to make Egypt a mere Babylonian province, sanctioned the succession of Ahmes to the throne, under the name of Amasis, after the death of Hophra,[4] contenting himself with making him tributary.

The new Pharaoh was not satisfied, however, with his position, and speedily strove to make himself independent. Taking advantage of the fine navy left by Hophra, he sailed against Cyprus, and conquered it; an act resented by Nebuchadnezzar as rebellion and a declaration of war. The Babylonian army was once more, therefore, directed against Egypt, and invaded it in B.C. 568, the thirty-seventh year of the Great King—three years after the former campaign on the Nile. The contest that followed was bitter in the extreme, most of the Delta being laid waste, with all its cities. At last, however,

[1] Any yellow-skinned or Semitic people.
[2] *Vigouroux*, vol. iv. p. 374. *Records of the Past*, vol. vi. p. 81.
[3] Ezek. xxx. 6. [4] Jer. xliv. 30.

Amasis was conquered, and though left on the throne, was again forced to become a tributary of Babylon. A clay tablet in the British Museum fortunately preserves a notice of this second Egyptian campaign; a fact specially interesting, since it is the only inscription of Nebuchadnezzar, referring to his wars, which has come down to us. It runs thus: "In the thirty-seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of the country of Babylon, he went to Egypt (Misr), to make war. Amasis, king of Egypt, collected (his army) and his soldiers marched and spread abroad." Then follow fragmentary lines, describing, apparently, his forces of horse, chariots, and infantry, but the tablet is, unfortunately, so imperfect that the issue of the campaign is lost.[1] Mutilated as it is, however, the notice is of extreme interest, since it shows the minute accuracy of the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, which have been treated by the new critics as unhistorical, it being assumed that Nebuchadnezzar never invaded Egypt.

[1] *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, vol. vii. pp. 210–225. *Vigouroux*, vol. iv. p. 376.



THE GOD AMON, "THE HIDDEN OR INVISIBLE ONE;" called also Nu or Num, after whom Thebes is called "No Amon" by the prophet.

# CHAPTER XI.

## ON THE CHEBAR.

THE prophet Jeremiah vanishes from the sacred record after his last vain appeal to his countrymen, at their great idol feast, to abandon idolatry. When that address was delivered, or where, is not related; though the fact that the Jews had spread over both Lower and Upper Egypt,[1] implies that the festival must have taken place years after the prophet's unwilling settlement on the Nile, about B.C. 587. At that time he seems to have been already over sixty years of age,[2] so that at the second campaign of Nebuchadnezzar in Egypt, in B.C. 568,[3] if he lived to see it, he would be nearly eighty. Whether he survived till then is not known, though his last words of remonstrance to the people he had so long faithfully taught, may date at least from B.C. 573, the year before the first Chaldean invasion of the Nile Valley. If, however, the closing verses of the 52nd chapter[4] were written by the prophet himself, he

[1] Jer. xliv. 1.

[2] Supposing him to have been about twenty on his call to the prophetic office in B.C. 625.

[3] *Rüetschi.* The date is uncertain as to the exact year. It may have been a year or two earlier.

[4] Jer. lii. 31–34.

lived till the reign of Evil-Merodach, son of Nebuchadnezzar, which began about B.C. 562 or B.C. 561.[1] In this case he must have been more than ninety at his death. But it is extremely doubtful whether these verses have not been added by a later hand. How or when he died is, in fact, quite uncertain. He may have been stoned to death by his countrymen at Tahpanhes, as Christian tradition affirms, or he may have gone to Babylon with the retiring army of Nebuchadnezzar, as the Rabbis allege. Josephus and the Scriptures are alike silent as to his later history or death; but the former tells us, that the remnant of the Jews who had fled to Egypt were carried off to Babylon by the Chaldeans.[2] It is quite possible that the silence as to his last days is a veil drawn over them by the Jews, to conceal the fact of his martyrdom; for we must not forget that our Lord accuses the nation of having habitually killed the prophets,[3] and we know from Jeremiah's own writings that his life was more than once threatened.

But if his death, like that of so many in all ages who have rebuked the sins of their generation, was that of a martyr, legend and tradition have united to shed an exceptional glory round his memory. The fulfilment of his prediction, that the exiles would return to Judea after seventy years, raised him, in the national estimation, to the highest rank among the prophets. Though long dead, it seemed as if a spirit so tender must still watch over the interests of the people. To think of him as their guardian or patron saint naturally followed. It was believed that, before the destruction of Jerusalem, the lost tabernacle and ark, and the treasures of the

[1] B.C. 562–560, *Birch.* B.C. 560–559, *Schrader.* B.C. 561–560, *Volck.*

[2] Jos., *Ant.*, X. ix. [3] Matt. xxiii. 39. Luke xi. 47.

Temple, had been hidden by him, in one of the caves of Nebo, till the day when the nation is restored to honour by the Messiah.[1] "The prophet," says the tradition "being warned of God, commanded the tabernacle and the ark to go with him, as he went forth to the mountain where Moses climbed up and saw the heritage of God. And when Jeremy came thither, he found a hollow cave, wherein he laid the tabernacle, and the ark, and the altar of incense, and so stopped the door. And some of those that followed him came to mark the way, but they could not find it. Which, when Jeremy perceived, he blamed them, saying, As for this place, it shall be unknown until the time that God gather His people again together, and receive them into mercy." The glory of Judas Maccabæus was heightened by a legend that the prophet appeared to him in a vision, as "a man with grey hairs and exceeding glorious, of a wonderful and excellent majesty," and gave him a golden sword sent down from God, to fight the battles of the Lord.[2] He was believed to continue in heaven the constant intercession for his race and for the holy city, which was believed to have marked him, as "a lover of the brethren," while on earth.[3] Apocryphal writings were issued in his name, to secure them popularity.[4] Nor would the nation believe that even his earthly relations to them were over; for so late as the days of our Lord, his return was confidently expected, to herald the advent of the Messiah.[5] To use the noble figure of Milton, the clouds that had accompanied and obscured his course in life, were transfigured to heavenly splendours after he had departed.

[1] 2 Macc. ii. 1-8. [2] 2 Macc. xv. 13, 15. [3] 2 Macc. xv. 14.
[4] See Baruch vi. *Hieron.*, on Matt. xxvii. 9. *Grotius*, on Eph. v. 14. [5] Matt. xvi. 14.

The glimpses of Jewish life on the banks of the Chebar, after the fall of Jerusalem, are not less interesting than those we obtain of the remnant which fled to Egypt.[1] In the month Tebet, corresponding roughly to our January, in the eleventh[2] year of the Captivity and of Zedekiah's reign, the news reached Ezekiel, in Babylonia, that the Temple had been carried by assault and burned, along with the city, on the 10th of the fifth moon[3]—the month Ab—nearly our August—five months before; so long had it taken for the news to reach the Euphrates. Like all true prophets and preachers in every age, he was intensely unpopular. His predictions of the fall of Jerusalem, the continuance of the Exile, and the ruin of the Jewish State, had been so bitterly resented, that for a number of years he had been refused a public hearing, and had been forced to remain silent, except to visitors in his own house. For many months back, however, he had felt that the approaching fulfilment of his gloomy forebodings, through the victory of Nebuchadnezzar in Palestine, would at last silence all opposition to him as a prophet speaking for God, and once more open the little world of the Exile to his words. None could any longer refuse to hear a seer whose utterances had been so wonderfully accomplished. His victory must come very soon, and his standing as a true spokesman for Jehovah be indisputably established.[4] At last, a fugitive from the storming of the Holy City reached the settlements on the Chebar, and brought to

[1] Ezek. xxxiii. 21.

[2] The Heb. has "the twelfth year," but as this would imply that it took eighteen months for the news to reach Babylon, it seems certain that some copyist has introduced an error into the text.

[3] Compare Jer. xxxix. 2; lii. 12.

[4] Ezek. iii. 26.

the prophet's house the first authentic news of the awful disaster. The spell of enforced silence was at once dissolved. The truth of his predictions was only too evident. His opponents dared no longer hinder him from the free exercise of his office.

A lingering hope was still cherished, however, among those around him, that the survivors of the catastrophe in Palestine might, after all, be able to maintain themselves as a feeble community, and thus form a centre to which the exiles might ere long rally, through some political revolution in Babylon. But Ezekiel hastened to dissipate all such dreams. The destruction of Jerusalem, he told them, would be followed by the utter ruin of the State and the complete desolation of the land. The results of the murder of Gedaliah by Ishmael soon vindicated this prediction. A second deportation to Babylon followed, and it even seems probable that the troubles excited by Gedaliah's death continued to show themselves in subsequent popular risings. Jeremiah speaks of a third deportation, five years after the fall of the capital.[1] Some of the bands of fighting men which had escaped the Chaldeans not improbably stood aloof from them permanently, keeping the country disturbed by harassing forays. But, like true Jews, even their robber life was dignified by a religious colouring. Few though they were, they fancied there was no reason to despair, since the land had been given to Abraham, when he was alone in the midst of the whole population; a much more hopeless position than theirs. Ezekiel, however, predicted a terrible end to these visionaries. Such a horde, wanting all true godliness, could neither preserve the land by their own efforts, nor expect to be maintained in it by Jehovah.

[1] Jer. lii. 30.

24 Son of Man[1] (said the Divine Voice to the prophet, apparently soon after the news of the great catastrophe reached him)—those who still live amidst the ruins of the land of Israel say: "Abraham was only one man and yet he inherited the land. But we are many, and the land is given us for an inheritance."

25 Say to them, therefore, Thus says the Lord Jehovah: Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes to the idols, and shed blood; and can *you* hope to possess the land? 26 Ye support yourselves by the sword and by violence[2] (not by justice and righteousness); ye work deeds of darkness, ye defile each man his neighbour's wife, and shall ye possess the land? 27 Speak thus, therefore, to them, Thus says the Lord Jehovah: As truly as I live, those who live in the ruined towns will fall by the sword, and those who live in the open country will I give to the wild beasts for meat, and those who lurk in strongholds and caves will die of the pestilence! 28 For I will lay the land utterly desolate, and the pride in her strength will cease, and the mountains of[3] Israel will be so desolate that no one will pass through them. 29 And when I have thus laid the country utterly desolate, for all the abominations they have committed, men will acknowledge that I am Jehovah!

If the prospects of the wild bands still wandering over Judea were thus dark, the apathy and ungodliness of the exiles on the Chebar gave little hope of religious earnestness being speedily awakened among them. Ezekiel could now speak freely. His brethren, awed by the fulfilment of the prophecies respecting Jerusalem, no longer interrupted or opposed him, but honoured him with a hypocritical respect, and affected to bow to his authority. They kept talking of him, says the sacred narrative,[3] in the shadow of their doors and houses, and invited each other to go to him and hear his addresses. Coming in crowds, they sat before him with the devout air of true servants of Jehovah, and professed themselves

[1] Ezek. xxxiii. 24-29. [2] Lit., "stand upon the sword."
[3] Ezek. xxxiii. 30-33.

delighted with his words, while they still secretly clung to their old sins. But the prophet saw through their insincerity. His discourses, he told them, simply tickled their ears, like a love-song well rendered, with its pleasant accompaniment of the lute or guitar; they heard him, and then dismissed all thought of his words. But the judgments of God, he assured them, were not exhausted. Such obduracy would bring fresh visitations, and under the infliction of these they would at last be forced to own, not in form only, but sincerely, that they had been listening to a true prophet of Jehovah.

Now that Jerusalem had fallen, the prophet's addresses to the people were necessarily changed in tone. The reproaches of former days would have been out of place. To rouse the nation to spiritual life was wiser and better. Like all his order, Ezekiel believed that the kingdom of God, as represented by his race, could not perish. A Messianic age must come. Henceforward, therefore, he sought to cheer and revive his brethren by keeping before them this great hope, even in the midst of their despair and ruin. But national restoration could be attained only by a deep sense of the guilt of the past, and sincere reformation. While, therefore, maintaining the certainty of a future Messianic age, notwithstanding all the confusion of the present, he did not keep back the conditions on which alone it could be secured. But these fulfilled, there were no bounds to its glory.

Hence, in the opening chapter of this new phase of his ministry,[1] Ezekiel, first of all, reminded his fellow exiles, so long indifferent or opposed to him, of the true office of a prophet, on their sincere realization of which the hope of sincere reformation depended. The word of Jehovah came to him, he tells us, with the following message.

[1] Ezek. xxxiii.

2 Son of Man![1] say to the sons of thy people, When I bring war on a country, and the people choose a man from their midst, and set him on the watch tower to look out; 3 and he sees the enemy[2] coming, and blows his trumpet and warns the people; 4 if any one hear his war horn and neglect the warning, so that the sword comes and cuts him off, his blood is on his own head. 5 He heard the horn, and took no heed, his blood is on himself. Had he taken warning he would have been saved.

6 But if the watcher see the foe coming, and do not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, so that the sword comes and cuts off one of them, the victim dies by his own fault, for he should have been on his guard, but I will demand his blood at the hand of the watcher!

7 I have set thee, son of man, as watcher for the House of Israel, that when thou hearest ought from My mouth, thou mayest warn them of it in My name. 8 If I say to the wicked, "Wicked one, thou must surely die," and thou warnest him not[3] from his evil way, that wicked man will certainly die for his sin, but I will require his blood at thy hand. If, however, thou hast warned the wicked man of his peril, and he does not turn, he shall die for his sin, but thou hast saved thy soul.

The true prophet is thus required to warn the sinner of the impending judgments of God, as the look-out man on the watch-tower is required to give timely and loud notice of the approach of the foe. Safety, therefore, demanded that the prophet have free speech. But that God should have given them a true seer in their midst, was a sure proof of His favour, which might well keep off despair. For Jehovah would fain save the wicked, and threatens wrath through His prophet only that every one may take heed and reform. There is still time for this as long as His final judgment has not fallen.

10 Speak thus, therefore, O son of man, to the House of Israel: Ye have said rightly,[4] (The punishment of) our trans-

[1] Ezek. xxxiii. 2-11. [2] Lit., "sword." [3] Lit., "the wicked."
[4] The word translated thus means also "rightly," "truly."

gressions and sins presses us down, and we decay to nothing through them;[1] how then can we hope to live again as a nation?
11 Tell them, As surely as I live, says the Lord, Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; My delight is that he should turn from his way and live! Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O House of Israel?

Self-righteousness, ever disposed to justify itself, had adopted among the exiles a comfortable theory, that they were punished for the sins of their forefathers rather than for their own. Ezekiel had often exposed this self-deception in the past,[2] but he again shows its hollowness.

12 Say[3] therefore, thou son of man, to the sons of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous will not save him in the day of his transgression, and the wicked will not fall[4] through his wickedness, in the day when he turns from it. Nor will the righteous preserve his life by having been so, in the day that he sins. 13 Though I say to the righteous, "he shall surely live," yet if he trust to his righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteous deeds shall not be remembered, but he shall die for the sin that he has done. 14 And in the same way, though I say to the wicked, "Thou shalt surely die," yet if he turn from his sin and do what is just and right; 15 if he give back the pledge (unrighteously detained), restore what he has robbed, and walk in the statutes of life, doing no evil, he shall surely live, he shall not die. 16 All his sins that he has done will be no more remembered; he now does what is just and right; he shall surely live. 17 Yet the sons of thy people say, "The way of the Lord is not just." But it is *their* way that is not just!
18 When the righteous turns from his righteousness and does evil, he will die for it. 19 But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and does what is just and right, he shall live for it. 20 Yet ye say, "The way of the Lord is not just." O ye House of Israel, I will judge you, every one after his own ways.

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[1] The figure is that of a decaying corpse.
[2] Ezek. iii. 20; xviii. 24, 26, 27.
[3] Ezek. xxxiii. 12–20.
[4] Lit., "stumble."

Such was the address with which Ezekiel re-opened his long-suspended public ministry. Responsible to God, as a divinely ordained preacher of righteousness, it was his imperative duty to tell his people their sins; to shrink from doing so was to imperil his own soul. On their part, it was no less imperative that they should repent, and honour the law of God in their hearts and lives. Thus alone could they bring about the glorious days of the Messiah for which they longed. In his next discourse, he passed from the sins of the people to those of their rulers and wealthy or powerful citizens. Their "shepherds" had hitherto sought only their own advantage, not that of their flock: injustice and violence had prevailed instead of right and truth, and the people had been plundered and oppressed, till at last, in great part through the fault of their "shepherds," utter ruin had overtaken the commonwealth.

The word of Jehovah came to him, he tells us, as follows:—

2 Son of man,[1] prophesy against the shepherds[2] of Israel, prophesy and say to them, Thus says the Lord Jehovah to the shepherds: Woe to the shepherds of Israel that fed (only) themselves! Should shepherds not rather feed the flocks? 3 Ye ate the fat[3] and clothed yourselves with the wool; ye killed the fatted sheep; ye fed not the flock! 4 Ye did not strengthen the weak, or heal the sick, or bind up the injured, or lead back the strayed, or seek the lost, but ruled lawlessly and with cruelty; 5 so that the flock was scattered for want of true shepherds, and became meat to all the beasts of the field, and was dispersed everywhere. 6 My sheep wandered over all the mountains and over every high hill, and were scattered over the whole earth, and no one asked after them or sought for them.

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[1] Ezek. xxxiv. 1–31. [2] Kings.
[3] Milk, butter, etc.—*Smend.*

But Jehovah will deliver His flock from such false shepherds. The state of things that had prevailed before the fall of the nation would not obtain after its restoration in the Messianic age.

7 Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of Jehovah: As I live, says the Lord Jehovah, because My flock was made a prey, and My sheep became food to every beast of the field through being left shepherdless, and because My shepherds did not search for them, but fed themselves and not My flock: 9 therefore hear the word of Jehovah, ye shepherds: 10 Thus says the Lord Jehovah; Behold I am coming to the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand, and will order it that they no longer feed the flock, nor even *themselves*, and I will rescue My sheep from their jaws, so that they shall no more be food for them.

Jehovah Himself will henceforth take the matter into His own hands. While He inflicts judgment on the heathen, He will gather together His scattered flock, and lead them back to their own land, where they will have the richest pasture and the tenderest care.

11 For thus says the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I Myself, even I, will both inquire after My sheep and take care of them. 12 As a shepherd takes care of his scattered flock when he is in the midst of them, so will I care for My sheep, and deliver them from all places to which they have been scattered in the day of clouds and darkness. 13 And I will lead them out from among the peoples, and gather them from the lands, and bring them to their own country, and feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. 14 I will feed them on good pasture, and their fold will be on the high mountains of Israel. They shall lie down there in a safe fold, and will have fat pasture on the hills of Israel. 15 I will feed My flock, and cause them to lie down, says the Lord Jehovah. 16 I will seek for the lost, and bring back what has been frightened away, and bind up what has been hurt, and make strong what is sick. But I will destroy the fat and lusty, and feed them with the punishment which is their due!

As the kings acted towards the whole people, so did the stronger in the community to the weak. The flock had not only worthless shepherds; there were among them hateful rams and he-goats which kept the weaker sheep from the pasture. These Jehovah will visit, dealing with all as is right, and He will finally unite the whole flock under one shepherd.

17 As for you, O My sheep, thus says the Lord Jehovah: Behold I will judge between one sheep and another; that is between the rams and he-goats (and the rest of the flock). 18 Is it not enough that you have eaten down the good pastures, (ye rams and he-goats); must ye also tread down with your feet what remains? Is it not enough that you have drunk up the settled and clear water; must you also foul what remains with your hoofs?

20 Therefore thus says the Lord Jehovah to them, Behold I, even I, will judge between the fat and lean sheep. 21 Because ye have thrust with side and shoulder, and pushed aside all the weaklings with your horns, till you have scattered them, 22 therefore I will help My sheep, so that they may no longer be a prey, and I will judge between sheep and sheep. 23 And I will set up a single shepherd over them, who will (really) feed them, My servant David; he will feed them, and be their shepherd. 24 And I, Jehovah, will be their God, and My servant David will be a prince in their midst; I, Jehovah, have spoken it!

Under this Messianic prince, Israel will dwell in peace and security.

25 And I will make a covenant of peace with them, and destroy evil beasts out of the land, and My flock will dwell safely in the pasture-country, and sleep in the woods.[1] 26 And I will bless them and the circuit of my hill,[2] and send rain in its season; there will be showers of blessing.[3] 27 The tree of the field will

[1] Heb. *yaar.* [2] The land of Canaan.

[3] The word used is that employed for the copious showers of November and December. *Herzog*, vol. xi. p. 26.

ield its fruit, and the earth its increase, and they will live ecurely in their own land, and know that I am Jehovah, when have broken the bows of their yoke, and delivered them from ie hand of those who held them as slaves 28 They will no nger be a prey to the heathen nations, nor shall the beast of ie field devour them, but they will dwell safely, none making iem afraid. 29 And I will give their soil rich fertility,[1] and ley will no more be destroyed by hunger in the land, or bear ay longer the reproach of the heathen. 30 And they will know iat I, Jehovah, their God, am with them, and that they are My eople, the House of Israel, says the Lord Jehovah. 31 But be e men, O My flock, the sheep of My pasture; I am your God, ays the Lord Jehovah!

Obedience to the teaching of the prophets, and sincere oyalty to Jehovah, would thus bring about spiritual and emporal regeneration. Still more; to secure the glory f the restored Israel, its enemies would be destroyed. Edom is selected as the representative of the heathen by whom Judah had been seduced from its faith, and at last rought to ruin. Bitterly hostile to the Jews for ages, ve have seen how it gloried in the triumph of Nebuhadnezzar. Since that time, moreover, it had seized a arge part of the territory of Judah, which it now held.[2] t would at last be shown, however, that Jehovah was with His people! Their prosperity would be secured, not only y a blessing on the land itself, but also by the destruction of all their foes.

1 The word of Jehovah came to me, saying,[3] 2 Son of man, urn thy face towards Mount Seir, and prophesy against it. 3 Thus

[1] Lit., "I will make to rise up for them a plantation of name," iat is, the soil which is planted will be famous for its yield, hrough the "showers of blessing," verse 26. The mountains of srael had long lain desolate, chap. xxxiii. 28.

[2] Ezek. vii. 24. Jer. xlix. 1. Lam. iv. 21. Ewald's *Geschichte*, ol. iv. p. 105.

[3] Ezek. xxxv.

says the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I am coming to thee, O Mount Seir, and will stretch out My hand against thee, and make thee waste and desolate. 4 I will lay thy towns in ruins, and thou shalt be a desert, and shalt know that I am Jehovah. 5 Because thou hast cherished undying hatred (against Israel), and gavest up its sons to the sword in the time of their trouble, the time when iniquity triumphed:[1] 6 therefore, as I live, says the Lord Jehovah, I will turn thee into blood, and blood will pursue thee! Thou hast not hated blood-shedding, and thirst for blood will pursue thee! 7 I will make Mount Seir waste and desolate, and cut off from it every one who either enters or leaves it, 8 and I will fill its mountains with its slain. On thy hills and in all thy ravines and torrent beds the slain by the sword shall fall. 9 I will make thee perpetual deserts, and thy towns will not be inhabited, that ye may know I am Jehovah. 10 Because thou hast said, "Both peoples (Israel and Judah) and both (their) territories shall be mine, and we shall take them in possession,"—though Jehovah dwelt there—11 therefore, as I live, says the Lord Jehovah, I will do to thee as thy rage and jealousy shown against My people, in thy hatred of them, deserves. I will make Myself known among thy sons, when I shall judge thee. 12 And thou shalt know that I, Jehovah, have heard all the words of scorn thou hast spoken against the mountains of Israel, saying: "They are laid waste! They are given to us to possess!"[2] 13 You have talked loftily with your mouth against Me, and have heaped up your words against Me: I have heard it! 14 Thus says the Lord Jehovah: When the whole earth rejoices, I will make thee a desolation. 15 As thou wert glad over the inheritance of the House of Israel, because it was laid waste, so will I do to thee. Thou shalt be a desert throughout, O Mount Seir, and all Edom; and they shall know that I am Jehovah.

Such would be the fate of the enemies of the people of God. Turning now to the land of Israel, the prophet cheers his countrymen by the promises of Jehovah, that

[1] A.V., "In the time of (our) sorest punishment," *Ewald*; "Of the iniquity of the end," *Cheyne* and *Clarke*; "When iniquity brought the end," *Eichhorn*.

[2] Lit., "for food."

it would see the cup of sorrow its children had drained, put to the lips of all their heathen foes.

1 Further,[1] son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel, saying: Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of Jehovah. 2 Thus says the Lord Jehovah: Because the enemy said respecting you, "Ha! the ancient hills are ours now:" 3 therefore prophesy and say: Thus says the Lord Jehovah, Because they laid you waste and panted after you on every side, that you might become a possession to the remnant of the nations (spared from the Chaldeans), till ye rose on the lips of every idle talker, and were in evil report among the peoples: 4 therefore, ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord Jehovah. Thus says the Lord Jehovah, to the mountains, and hills, and ravines,[2] and plains, and to the desolate ruins and forsaken towns, which served for a prey and a scoff to the remnant of the heathen round; 5 Verily, in the glow of My anger do I speak against the remnant of the heathen, and against all Edom, who with gladness of heart and deadly scorn have appropriated My land, to desolate and plunder it—6 Prophesy, therefore, respecting the land of Israel, and say to the mountains, and hills, and ravines, and plains, Thus says the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I have spoken in My wrath and indignation, because ye have borne the contempt of the nations. 7 Therefore, thus says the Lord Jehovah: I have lifted up My hand (and sworn); verily the nations round you shall bear their (share of) contempt (in turn)!

On the other hand, God will bless His own land.

8 But ye, O mountains of Israel, shall shoot out your verdure and yield your fruits to My people Israel, for they will soon come! 9 For, behold, I am for you, and will turn My face towards you, and ye shall be ploughed and sown. 10 And I will increase men on you—all the House of Israel—all of it, and the towns will be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt. 11 And I will increase men and cattle on you, and they will multiply and be fruitful, and I will make you be inhabited as in former times, and show you more good than in your earlier days, that ye may know that I am Jehovah. 12 I will make men—My people Israel—walk on you,

[1] Ezek. xxxvi. [2] Lit. "torrents."

and they will possess you, and you will be their inheritance, and you will no more be left without inhabitants.[1] 13 Thus says the Lord Jehovah, Because they say to you, "Thou land of Israel art a devourer of men,[2] and hast made thy people childless;" 14 therefore thou shalt no longer devour men, nor make thy people childless any more, saith the Lord Jehovah. 15 Neither will I cause thee to bear any longer the contempt of the nations, nor wilt thou be any more the scorn of the peoples, nor cause thy sons[3] to be childless any more.[4]

The banishment of Israel had been brought about by its own sins. But the heathen among whom they were scattered had profaned the Divine name on their account, imputing their calamities to the weakness of their national god.

17 Son of man, when Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their way and their doings; their conduct was vile in My eyes, as the foulest uncleanness. 18 Therefore I poured out My wrath on them for the blood they had shed in their land,[5] and because they had polluted it with their foul gods. 19 And I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the lands; I judged them according to their way and their doings. 20 But when they came to the heathen peoples, they made My holy name to be profaned, for men said of them, "These are Jehovah's people, and yet are driven out of His land!" 21 But now I must vindicate My holy name, thus brought into dishonour among the heathen, through Israel.

Their deliverance would be due to this jealousy of His own honour, on the part of Jehovah, not to any merit in His people.

22 Therefore say to the House of Israel, Thus says the Lord Jehovah: I do this not for your sakes, O House of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which ye have caused to be dishonoured

[1] Lit., "orphaned." [2] Feminine. [3] Lit., "nation."
[4] Correction of the Hebrew by the Masorites.
[5] In violence and by human sacrifices.

among the heathen, among whom ye are come. 23 I shall therefore vindicate the holiness of My great name, which ye have caused to be dishonoured among the heathen, bringing discredit on it among them, that the heathen may know that I am Jehovah, says the Lord Jehovah, when I shall show Myself holy in you before their eyes. 24 For I will take you out from among the heathen, and gather you from all countries, and bring you again to your own land.

To restore former relations with them, however, was impossible while they were still estranged in heart. Nor could any radical change be expected from their own initiative. Their conversion must come from God Himself. He will, therefore, of His free grace, make them in reality His children, by bringing about in their hearts a true spiritual change. He will cleanse them from their sins and put His spirit into their renewed hearts.

25 And that ye may be cleansed from your sins, I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and I will make you clean from all your filthiness and from all your foul gods. 26 And I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh; 27 and I will put My spirit within you, that ye may walk in My statutes and keep My laws and do them, 28 and ye shall dwell in the land which I gave to your fathers, and ye shall be My people, and I will be your God.

They will henceforward loathe their former ways, and God will bless the land and give them prosperity. But all this is a free gift, bestowed of His infinite mercy on the undeserving.

29 And I will keep you from again falling into your old uncleannesses, and will call forth corn (out of the earth) and make it yield richly, and bring no famine on you. 30 And I will increase the fruit of the tree, and the yield of the ground, that the reproach of hunger may no more be cast on you among the heathen. 31 And ye will think, then, of your evil ways and wrong doings, and abhor yourselves for your iniquities and abominations.

32 But, be it known to you, that it is not for your sakes I do this, says the Lord Jehovah: be ashamed and blush for your ways, O House of Israel!

33 Thus says the Lord Jehovah: When I have cleansed you from all your iniquities, and caused you to dwell in the towns of your land; when the ruined places are rebuilt, 34 and the wastes tilled again, so that they are no longer desert before the eyes of all that pass by; 35 then will men say, "The land which was once desolate is become like the garden of Eden; the waste, deserted, and ruined towns are walled round and inhabited." 36 Then the heathen peoples left round you will know that I, Jehovah, rebuilt what was ruined, and planted again what was laid waste. I, Jehovah, have said and will do it.

37 Thus says the Lord Jehovah: I will yet be sought by the House of Israel to do this for them, (and, in answer to their prayers) I will increase them with men, like a flock—like the flock for the holy offerings, the flock at Jerusalem in the time of her feasts;[1] the cities now deserted will be filled with flocks of men, and all shall know that I am Jehovah.

Such were some of the discourses by which Ezekiel sought to rekindle the hopes of his fellow-exiles, and recall them to a higher spiritual life, in preparation for their future return to Palestine. The deep gloom that had settled on all, however, after the fall of Jerusalem, seemed beyond removal. The nation was, apparently, dead. Could it rise again? Not only was national life gone; there remained nothing of Israel but some dry bones from which the flesh was wasted and gone. Such thoughts may have been uttered around the prophet. But no difficulty shook his faith in what Jehovah had promised. Yet the terrible comparison of his people to the dead dwelt in his thoughts, till in the end it rose before him in a brighter aspect as the central glory of a prophetic vision. In this he seemed carried away by the Spirit of Jehovah to the plain or valley near Tel Abib,

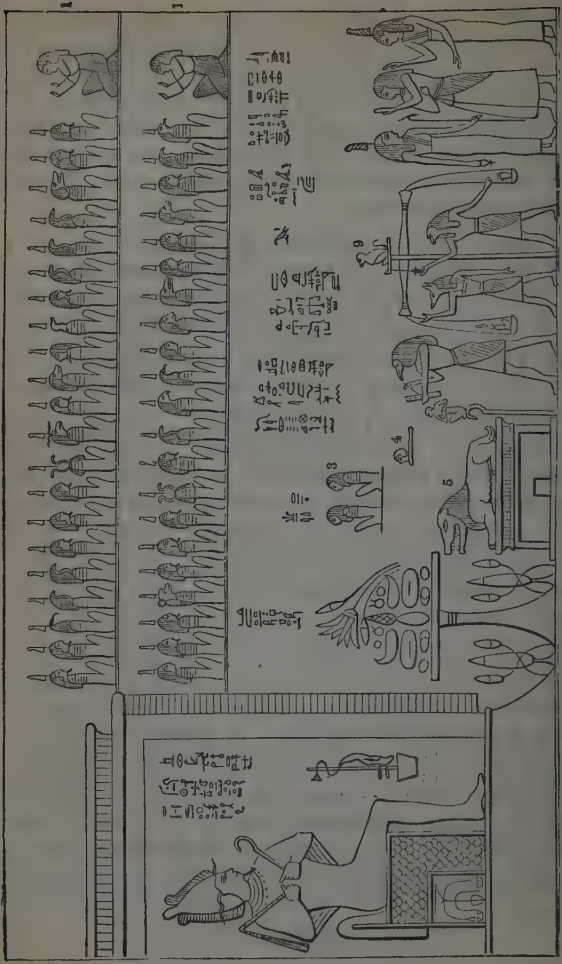
[1] 2 Chron. xxxv. 7. Deut. xvi. 16.

familiar to him of old as the scene of the vision of the Cherubim. Now, however, to his horror, he found it full of dry withering bones[1]—the wreck of a vast host slain by the sword. Wandering over the wide expanse, the multitude of these ghastly relics of mortality and their bleached dryness, the very embodiment of death, filled him with awe, and, while thus overpowered, Jehovah seemed to address him.

3 "Son of man, will these bones live again?" Then said I, "O Lord Jehovah, Thou knowest." 4 Then said He to me, "Call to these bones, and say to them, 'Ye dry bones, hear the word of Jehovah. 5 Thus says the Lord Jehovah to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. 6 And I will create sinews on you, and make flesh grow on you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live, and acknowledge that I am Jehovah.'"

7 So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I did so, there was a noise and a commotion, and the bones came together, bone to bone. 8 And I looked, and, behold, sinews came on them and flesh grew upon them, and skin covered them; but there was no spirit in them. 9 Then said he to me, Call, O son of man, call to the breath of life, and say to it, Come from the four winds, O breath of life, and breathe into these slain, that they may live. 10 So I called as He commanded me, and the breath of life entered them, and they came to life, and stood up on their feet, a very great army. 11 Then said He to me, Son of man, these bones are the whole House of Israel! Behold, (your fellow-exiles) truly say, "(We are not only dead, but) our very bones are (scattered), dry (and bleached): we have lost hope, we feel ourselves utterly gone (as a nation)." 12 Therefore prophesy and say to them, Thus says the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to rise out of them, and will bring you to the land of Israel. 13 And ye shall know that I am Jehovah, when I open (even) your graves, (as it were), and lead you forth from them, O My people, 14 and put My Spirit in you, so that you may live again and settle in your own land. Then shall you know that I, Jehovah, have spoken, and performed, says Jehovah.

[1] Ezek. xxxvii.



JUDGMENT SCENE, FROM EGYPTIAN "BOOK OF DEATH."

This cut shows the Egyptian ideas of the future world, which had been for ages known to the Jews. Ezekiel's vision only describes a *national* resurrection, but it seems to imply a belief in the resurrection of the body. See Daniel xii. 2. I owe the following explanation to my learned friend, Dr. Birch, of the British Museum.

"The subject of the plate is the vignette of the 125th chapter of the Ritual. It is entitled, 'The going to the Hall of the two Truths and making the deceased to see the faces of the gods.' It is the scene of the great Judgment of the Dead. On the left Osiris is seated, holding a crook in his left hand and the three-thonged whip in his right. He is mummied and on a throne. The crook and whip have mystical significations of his power over the lower world. The object before him is a panther's or calf's skin placed on a pole stuck into a kind of pedestal. This, I think, indicates the word *nem*, or 'second life.' He is in a shrine. Before him is inscribed 'Osiris, the good Being, lord of life, great god, ruler of eternity, resident in the land of Akar (Hades)—resident in the west—lord of Abydos, king of ages."

Before the shrine are the following:—

1. Two rows of 21 gods of the dead, in all, 42, each of whom received a confession of the deceased that he had not committed one of the 42 sins which formed the Egyptian decalogue. The deceased, Nasamsi, is seen kneeling and addressing them. Beneath the frieze of the hall are (2) a table of offerings, gourds, and water plants. Under the table are two jars with water plants entwined. Above is an illegible inscription apparently intended for "the gift of offerings in Hades." 3. Two forms, Shai, "Fate," and Renut, "her nurse." 4. The symbols Meskhent, "the cradle." 5. The Amt, "devourer" of wicked souls—annihilation. 6. Harpakhrat, on a crook, the symbol of the New Birth. 7. Thoth, recording on his patella, or writing desk, the decision of the god as to the future state of the soul. 8. The balance, surmounted by (9) the cynocephalus, Anubis, jackal-headed, holding the weights of the scale of Truth on the one side of the balance, and Horus holding the heart of the deceased on the other scale. The inscription over the head of these figures says, "Said by the lord of Hermopolis (Thoth), great god, chief of Hesar—he has put the heart of the Osiris (deceased) Nasamsi, in its place." The other inscription in this portion refers to Anubis, "The head of the divine place (Anubis)—he says his heart is in the midst of the balance filled with the Osiris Nasamsi. Above, also, is "Horus," the name of the god. 10. 11. 12. The deceased introduced by the Two Truths into the Hall. The inscription here says, "Truth the ruler of the west, she gives his name, in his abode he is to be united to his cell (body) for ever." The last inscription reads, "Like him who is head of the west (Osiris), she gives the two hands to thee, Osiris Nasamsi, born of the lady of the house Satarbuni, whose word is true."

Of the tenant of an Egyptian mausoleum, Mr. Gerald Massey gave this description in a recent lecture:—"With his viscera separately preserved in four canopic jars, his body steeped for seventy days in wine and natron, and bound up in a linen swathe, some seven hundred yards in length, woven without seam; his hair made up into a ball and coated with bitumen; his teeth and nails covered with gold leaf; the collar of Nine Beads, worn by Isis, encircling his neck, the beetle-type of transformation placed within his breast, the mummy was deposited in the sarcophagus called 'Hen-Ankhu' (the chest of the living); a copy of the book of breath was his pillow, and the leaves of the book of life were the lining of his coffin; his types of protection, duration, and renewal were around him, and with the eyes of the sun and moon to light him through the long darkness, the Egyptian entered his tomb, called the 'Good Dwelling.' A number of copies of the Shebti, or Double of the Dead, were ranged in the Serdab, to signify repetition, and the Ka-image of his spiritual self was erected in the tomb as his link with the living."

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE VISION OF THE FUTURE.

IN the passages quoted in the preceding chapter we have samples of the preaching of the prophets of the Exile, of whom Ezekiel was only one. He did not content himself, however, with his sublime vision of the resurrection of the dead, so well fitted to revive the community from its dejection, but followed it up, soon after, with glowing pictures of the glory of the nation when thus restored. Aflame with patriotic enthusiasm, which in his case was identical with zeal for Jehovah, he anticipated a wondrous Messianic future. The deportation of the Ten Tribes to Assyria, more than a century and a half before, had effaced all ancient grudges and rivalries from the breasts of the Two Tribes then still left in the land, and had awakened a spirit of brotherhood which yearned for a time when the whole nation, so long divided and estranged, would unite under one head, as in the happy days before Rehoboam. The prophets no less than the people looked forward to this much-desired consummation. Hosea[1] predicted its certain attainment under the future Messianic king. Amos, Micah,

[1] Hosea i. 11; iii. 5. Amos ix. 11. Micah ii. 12, 13; v. 2. Isa xi. 13. Jer. iii. 18.

Isaiah, and Jeremiah, in succession, dwelt on it, to cheer the darkness of troubled times. The day was coming when "Judah and Israel would be gathered again and appoint themselves one head." "Ephraim would not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim." "Judah would come, together with Israel, out of the land of the North, to the land of their fathers." The misery of the past had risen in great measure from the rupture of the kingdom of David. Constant civil wars had weakened both North and South, and left them a prey to their heathen enemies around. The Ten Tribes, while their kingdom stood, had been so numerous and powerful compared with Judah, that they had been recognised as "Israel," and it was impossible to conceive of any national restoration which would not include them. Even in Ezekiel's time, moreover, their colonies still existed in Assyria, and the deliverance of these seemed as easy as that of Judah from Babylon.

With the confident expectation of this return of all the Twelve Tribes to their own country,[1] and their happy union under one ruler, a confident belief was cherished that this King would be a descendant of their hero—David. It was necessarily taken for granted by both prophets and people, that the anointed leader, or Messiah, thus expected, would restore the kingdom on the lines of its ancient constitution, for they knew nothing higher. There might be a great advance in the religious and moral condition of the community, its glory might be immeasurably developed, and its Messiah Prince might reign in hitherto unimagined righteousness and peace; but, at its highest, the restored kingdom would

[1] Jer. ii. 4; iii. 18; v. 11; xxxi. 15. Ezek. iv. 4, 5; xvi. 53; xx. 40; xxxvii. 11; xxxix. 25; xlvii. 13; xxxiv. 23; xi. 15; ix. 9, etc.

only be a transfiguration of that of David. The conception of a purely spiritual kingdom lay outside the range of human thought, and was not dreamed of till proclaimed by the lips of our Lord. Hence the utterances of Ezekiel, like those of all his order, could picture the glories of the future only in imagery drawn from the past. It was reserved to later ages to learn their higher significance through the light shed upon them by Christ. That Jewish ideas and aspirations fill the visions of the prophets, need not therefore surprise us, though it is essential that we realize their significance by the light of New Testament revelation. It was quite in keeping with this inevitable mode of thought that the ancient prophets had looked forward to the future glory of Israel as necessitating the return of the Ten Tribes from exile; for the idea of a spiritual Israel, distinct from the political, was beyond them. Nor was it possible for Ezekiel to think or speak except as a Jew, with the longings and expectations of his day, unconscious that his visions had a deeper meaning than he conjectured. He also, therefore, proclaimed the approaching deliverance of the Ten Tribes, and their union with Judah under a common head, sprung from David, the great king of the yet undivided people. The word of Jehovah, he tells us, came to him,[1] saying,—

16 Son of man, take one rod, and write on it, "Judah, and the sons of Israel united with him;"[2] then take another rod, and write upon it, "Joseph, the representative[3] of Ephraim and all the House of Northern Israel allied to it:" 17 and bring them together, one rod to the other, so that they may be united in thy hand. 18 And when the sons of thy people say to thee, "Wilt thou not show us what thou meanest by this?" 19 Answer them, "Thus

[1] Ezek. xxxvii. 15 ff. [2] *i.e.* Benjamin and part of Simeon.
[3] Lit., "tree."

says the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will take the rod, or sceptre, of Joseph, held by Ephraim and the tribes of Israel joined with him, and will put it to this rod of Judah, and make them one rod, that they may be one in My hand. 20 (To teach thy people this) the rods on which thou writest shall be in thy hand, before their eyes; 21 and thou shalt say to them, "Thus says the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the heathen, whither they are gone, and gather them from all parts, and bring them to their own land. 22 And I will make them one people in the land, on the mountains of Israel, and one king shall reign over them all: and they will no longer be two peoples, nor will they any longer be divided into two kingdoms. 23 They will no more defile themselves with their foul gods or with their abominations, or with their (former) transgressions; but I will help them from all their backslidings[1] by which they have sinned, and will cleanse them, and they shall be My people, and I will be their God. 24 And My servant David will be king over them,[2] and they will (thus) all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My laws, and keep My statutes, and do them. 25 And they will dwell in the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers dwelt; they will dwell there, they, and their children, and their children's children for ever; and My servant David will be their prince for ever.

26 And I will make a covenant of peace with them, a covenant which will endure for ever, and I will bless them,[3] and increase them, and set My sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. 27 My dwelling-place also will be over them;[4] I will be their God, and they will be My people. 28 And the heathen shall know that I, Jehovah, set apart Israel as holy to Myself, when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore."

This exquisite picture of absolute security and prosperity could not, however, be realized as complete without an assurance of protection from hostile attacks, and this, therefore, is added. The wild races of Scythia had spread terror over all Western Asia in the days of Josiah, and were still remembered with dread. The heathen

[1] *Sept. Ewald. Hitzig. Eichhorn.* [2] Ezek. xxxiv. 23.
[3] *Targum.* [4] They will, as it were, dwell in My tent.

nations as a whole, in their opposition to the kingdom of God, are represented, therefore, under the figure of a second invasion of the Holy Land by these barbarous hordes. But He who had led His people back from captivity would prove Himself their Almighty defender; the foe would be triumphantly overthrown, and Israel, the kingdom of the Messiah, finally delivered from all fear, would enter on a lasting career of temporal and spiritual prosperity.

2 Son of man,[1] said the Word, turn thy face against Gog of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal,[2] and prophesy against them, saying, Thus says the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I am coming to thee, O Gog, thou chief prince of Meshech and Tubal; 4 and will lure thee on, and put rings in thy jaws,[3] and draw thee forth, thou and all thine army, horses and riders, all gorgeously clad, a vast multitude with great shields and small, all wielding swords. 5 Persia, Ethiopia, and Phut[4] are with them; 6 the Cimmerian Gomer,[5] and all his squadrons; the house of Togarmah[6] in the farthest north, and all his bands;

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[1] Ezek. xxxiv., xxxix.

[2] See vol. i. p. 232. "Rosh," translated "chief," in ver. 2 is taken as a proper name by some, but most translators render the phrase as in the text. Schrader (*Keilinschriften*, 2te Aufg., 1882) accepts Magog as equivalent to Scythians (p. 80). Tubal = Tabal, according to him, bordered on Cilicia, and seems to have been what was afterwards Cappadocia. It was famous for "great horses" (p. 83). Meshech he regards as having lain N.E. of Cappadocia, in Lower Armenia (p. 84). It is mentioned by Tiglath-Pileser I. (B.C. 1100) along with Tubal or Tabal.

[3] See vol. v. p. 90.

[4] *Heb.* These are in the farthest south from Babylon, where Ezekiel lived. The Asiatic Cush or Ethiopia lay in Central and Northern Babylon. *Fried. Delitzsch;* but see vol. i. p. 238. Phut was the name, according to Ebers, of some wandering tribes of Arabia. *Egypt. u. die B. Moses*, p. 63; but see vol. i. p. 249. Sayce thinks Phut was the Somali country in Eastern Africa.

[5] Vol. i. p. 230.

[6] Vol. i. p. 232.

many people with thee! 7 Be ready, prepare thyself! thou, and all thy hosts who gather round thee, and be thou their leader. 8 After many days thou wilt be mustered; at the end of years thou wilt come into the land[1] redeemed from the sword, gathered out of many peoples, to the mountains of Israel which so long lay waste, though now thy tribes have been led forth again to them from among the heathen, and dwell together in security. 9 Thou shalt rush on, coming like a tempest, like a storm-cloud, to cover the land, thou, and all thy hosts of many peoples, with thee.

The invasion of Israel by this fierce and terrible army is now described. The towns lie open, in fancied security, apparently the prize of a sudden attack.

10 Thus says the Lord Jehovah: In that day thoughts will come into thy heart, and thou wilt lay wicked plans, saying, 11 "I will burst into the open country of unwalled villages; I will come upon them that live in peace, dwelling in (fancied) security; who live without walls, or bars, or gates." 12 (This thou wilt do) to obtain plunder and gather spoil, to lay thine hand on the newly rebuilt towns, lately in ruins, and on a people gathered (by Me, Jehovah) out of the nations—a people already possessing cattle and goods, and inhabiting the centre land[2] of the earth.

The traders of widely different nations naturally follow a host drawn from so many lands, to buy up the plunder and slaves. On such a harvest they counted, and they rejoice in proportion as it becomes evident that relentless spoil is the one object of the war.

13 Sabæa,[3] and Dedan,[4] and the traders of Tarshish,[5] with all the young men from them, greedy for gain as young lions for prey, who come to traffic in the booty, will say to thee, "Hast thou (really) come only to plunder? Hast thou gathered thy

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[1] The land = the people of the land (Israel).

[2] Lit., "navel." Note this conception of the position of Palestine.

[3] Vol. i. p. 241. [4] *Ibid.* [5] Vol. i. p. 235.

host only to collect spoil? to carry off silver and gold, to take cattle and goods, to heap up a great booty?"

The remorseless guilt of such an invasion of a nation dwelling in peace, and offering no cause for attack, is further insisted upon.

14 Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say to Gog, Thus says the Lord Jehovah: Is it not thus that thou wilt stir thyself, and come from thy home in the farthest north, in the day when My people Israel dwells in peace—15 thou and many nations with thee, all on horse; a mighty host, a vast army, 16 and shalt advance against My people Israel, covering the earth like a cloud? At the end of days I will bring thee against My land, that the heathen may learn whom I am, when I show Myself holy before their eyes, in thy punishment, O Gog!

This retribution will surely strike down the invader. Nature itself will be convulsed, to overthrow him utterly.

17 Thus says the Lord Jehovah: Art thou he of whom I have prophesied in former times by My servants,[1] the prophets of Israel, who in those days prophesied, long years together, that I would bring thee against them? 18 It shall come to pass in that day, in the day when Gog comes against the land of Israel, says the Lord Jehovah, My wrath shall rise up in My nostrils! 19 For in My indignation, in the glow of my anger, have I spoken thus: "Verily, in that day there will be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. 20 The fish of the sea, the fowls of the heaven, the beasts of the earth, and all that moves on the face of the ground, and all men on the face of the land, will tremble before me, and the mountains will be thrown down, and the cliffs of the hills fall, and every wall sink to the ground. 21 And I will call aloud to all My mountains, for the sword against Gog," says the Lord Jehovah; "every man's sword will be against his

[1] The prophecies here referred to may not have been preserved, or those in which the judgment of God on the heathen are foretold may be meant. See Joel iv. 2, 11. Isa. xxv. 5, 10; xxvi. 21. Jer. xxx. 23, 25.

fellow. 22 And I will execute My judgments against him with pestilence and with blood, and I will rain on him, and on his hosts, and on the many nations with him, a storm-deluge of rain, and hailstones, and fire, and brimstone. 23 And I will show My greatness and My holiness, and will reveal Myself in the eyes of many nations, that they may know that I am Jehovah."

This final overthrow of the enemies of Israel, thus vividly described, was nevertheless too grand a theme to be dismissed without another outburst of prophetic jubilation. The certain triumph of the Anointed King, the Messiah, is therefore once more announced in the next strophes of this grand prediction.

1 Son of man,[1] prophesy respecting Gog, and say, Thus speaks the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I am coming to thee, O Gog, thou chief prince of Meshech and Tubal! 2 I will lure thee out, and lead thee forth,[2] and draw thee on, from the furthest north, and bring thee to the mountains of Israel! 3 And (there) I will smite the bow out of thy left hand, and cause thy arrows to fall from thy right hand.[3]

4 And thou shalt fall on the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy hosts, and the peoples who are with thee; I will give thee for meat to the birds of prey of all kinds, and to the beasts of the field. 5 Thou shalt fall in the open field, for I have spoken it, says the Lord Jehovah. 6 And I will send fire on (the land of) Magog (itself), and on them that dwell in security on the sea-coasts,[4] and they shall know that I am Jehovah. 7 Thus will I make known My holy name in the midst of My people Israel, and not suffer it to be any longer profaned, that the heathen may know that I am Jehovah, the Holy One in Israel. 8 Behold, it

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[1] Ezek. xxxix.

[2] Draw thee with leading-strings. *Ewald.*

[3] Bows and arrows were the special weapons of the Scythians. Jer. v. 16; vi. 23. "Horse-bowmen" is the name given them by Herodotus. *Herod.*, iv. 46.

[4] The distant coasts and islands of the ends of the earth, from which the allies of Gog came.

comes—it is as good as done, says the Lord Jehovah! This is the day of which I have spoken![1]

The victory will be complete and the booty immense. The weapons of the slain will supply fuel for seven years to Israel, whose land had little wood, and the burial of the dead will take seven months; men being employed even longer in searching for bones that had been overlooked, to remove all traces of defilement from the holy soil.

9 The men of the towns of Israel will go out (after the catastrophe), and there make fires of the arms (cast away by the fugitives, or left by the dead)—the large shields and the small, the bows and the arrows, the war clubs,[2] and the spears; seven years long will they use them for fuel. 10 They will not need to bring faggots from the field or to cut down fuel in the *yaars*,[3] for the wood of these arms will serve them for firing, and they will spoil those that spoiled them, and plunder those that plundered them, says the Lord Jehovah.

The corpses of enemies were generally left unburied, or at most were interred without the usual rites, only to prevent pestilence or defilement; slain foes thus passing into the underworld as "uncircumcised," that is, discredited and put to shame.[4] In this case, the dead will be left unburied, a prey to the vultures and wild beasts; but, after these have feasted on them,[5] the bones will finally be collected and thrown ignominiously into one of the deep ravines on the east side of the Dead Sea, outside the limits of the Holy Land, of which the Jordan

[1] The great day of Jehovah. Joel ii. 11. Zeph. i. 14. Isa. ii. 12; xiii. 6. Jer. xlvi. 10. Ezek. xiii. 5. Amos v. 18. See also references from these texts.

[2] Hitzig thinks the rods used to drive on the horses meant, but this seems very poor.

[3] Vol. iv. p. 358.

[4] Ezek. xxviii. 10; xxxii. 17.

[5] Ezek. xxxix. 17.

will form the boundary,[1] and thus the soil of Israel will be purified from the defilement of unburied human remains.

11 In that day I will appoint Gog a burial place in Israel, the ravine of the invading hosts of the wicked[2] on the east of the (Dead) Sea, and it will bar the way of invaders or passers-by,[3] and there they will bury Gog and all his host, and they will call it "The ravine of the host of Gog." 12 And the House of Israel will be employed seven months in burying them, to cleanse the land. 13 The whole people of the land will help, and it will be a famous day for them when I glorify Myself thus, says the Lord Jehovah. 14 And they will set apart, permanently, chosen men to travel through the land, to bury any bones of the invaders that have been overlooked, that the country may be thoroughly cleansed. They will begin their search after the seven months of burying have ended. 15 And if any of them, passing through the land, see a human bone, he will set up a mark beside it, that the buriers of the dead may bury it in the ravine of the host of Gog. 16 (And as a memorial of the event) the name of Hamona —the host—will be given to one of the towns of the land.[4] Thus the land will be cleansed!

The number of the slain will be so great that Jehovah again calls on the vultures and wild beasts to come to the ghastly feast on human flesh prepared for them.

[1] Ezek. xlvii. 18.

[2] Lit., "passers-by." It is in one case rendered in our version as "transgressors" (Prov. xxvi. 10), and the verb of which it is a participle is often translated to "transgress." It may mean either the "invaders," the "wandering hordes," or the "godless." The name seems to be given from the burial of the host of Gog in it. It is now unknown what place the prophet intended, if, indeed, the allusion be not merely figurative. Eichhorn changes the word Oberim into Abarim, and thinks the valley of that name is meant.

[3] I have here combined the renderings of different critics.

[4] This clause is obscure.

17 Thou also, son of man, call to every kind of bird of prey and to every beast of the field: "Assemble and come; gather from all sides to My sacrifice feast, which I have slain for you—a great sacrifice feast on the mountains of Israel—to eat flesh and drink blood."

18 "Ye shall eat the flesh of heroes and drink the blood of princes of the earth, rams, and lambs, and goats, and fed bullocks of Bashan.[1] 19 And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, from My sacrifice feast which I have slain for you. 20 And ye shall have your fill at My table, of horses and riders,[2] heroes and men of war of all arms, says the Lord Jehovah."

21 Thus shall I display My glory among the heathen, and all their nations shall see My judgment that I have executed, and My hand that I have laid on them. 22 And the House of Israel shall know that I, Jehovah, am their God, from that day on, for ever; 23 and the heathen shall know that the House of Israel went into captivity for their sin; and that I hid My face from them, and gave them into the hand of their oppressors, so that they all fell by the sword, because they had been unfaithful to Me. 24 I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their transgressions, and hid My face from them.

The purpose of the destruction of Gog, like that of the restoration of Israel, is declared by the prophet to be the glory of the Divine name before the heathen and Israel. Meanwhile, after the Return, the justice of God in the exile of His people will be acknowledged, and He will no more veil His face from them, but will pour out on them His Spirit, the pledge of His abiding favour.

25 Therefore, thus says the Lord Jehovah: I will now bring back again the exiles of Jacob (to their own home), and have pity on the whole House of Israel, and be jealous for My holy name.

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[1] The heroes and princes are called by these names of animals used in sacrifice. Isa. xxxiv. 6. Jer. xlvi. 10. The usage is frequent in Scripture.

[2] *Keil. Ewald. Eichhorn.*

26 And they shall bear, (as penitents), their shame for all the transgressions (formerly) committed against Me, when they (once more) dwell safely in their own land, none making them afraid.
27 When I bring them back again from the peoples, and gather them out of the lands of their enemies, and show Myself holy towards them before many nations, 28 they shall know that I, Jehovah, am, and was, their God, alike when I banished them among the heathen, and (afterwards) when I gathered them again into their own land, leaving none behind (in captivity).
29 And I will hide My face no more from them, but will pour out My Spirit on the House of Israel, says the Lord Jehovah.

Ezekiel had now painted the future of the people of God, till their triumphant establishment in their own land, after the overthrow of all opposition; their hearts changed from stone to flesh, and the Divine Spirit bestowed on them, to secure their permanent fidelity to Jehovah. Such a picture could hardly be realized in a national sense, for in any general community there must always be good and bad. It must therefore have referred—though the prophet may not have penetrated the full significance of his own utterances—to a spiritual Israel, under a spiritual Messiah, not to the national Israel, though the chosen people.[1] But this higher and nobler theocracy demanded, like that of Moses, a central sanctuary, a body of laws, and a distribution of the soil amongst its population. As became the scenery of visions, those picturing the restoration and its attendant wonders had throughout been in the highest degree figurative, and so is their culmination in the chapters that follow. The overthrow of Gog had been painted in the boldest poetical images; all the powers of nature conspiring to fight for Israel, as when Joel sees the sun turned into darkness and the moon into blood;[2] and hears Jehovah shout the battle cry as He rushes down

[1] Rom. ii. 28, 29; ix. 6. [2] Joel, chapters iii. and iv.

from Zion, and the heavens and earth seem to shake at the overthrow of the heathen, in "the great day of the Lord."

Such language is that of the loftiest poetry, and must not be treated as if it were prose; it presents a great truth, but the details are not intended to foreshadow a literal realization. The same principle must be kept in view in the remaining chapters of Ezekiel's visions, portraying in words equally figurative the features of the New Theocracy, amidst redeemed and regenerated Israel. He writes as a Jew and as a priest, using the imagery of the little world in which he moved; the only material he had in which to embody his thoughts.

Carried off to Babylon in opening manhood, from his priestly functions and their daily associations, every detail of these had impressed itself on the mind of Ezekiel with all the vividness and tender sympathy felt through life for the reminiscences of our early years. The Temple in all its aspects was the central object in his recollections. Its buildings, in all their parts and uses; its worship, in all its rites; its economy in the minutest particulars, had been familiar to him from childhood, and stood out in his memory with unfading clearness, in the land of his exile. The Messianic kingdom, when it should come, could in his opinion have no grander sanctuary than a transfiguration of that on Mount Zion, where Jehovah had sat between the cherubim. It was, indeed, inevitable, as has been noticed, that the materials of his visions should be drawn from the range of his experience; for the human mind cannot create, but only contrast and combine, or develop. We have seen how, thus, in his conceptions of the cherubim, he avails himself of the mythological colossi around him in Babylonia;[1] though

[1] Vol v. p. 437.

even these, if we think of it—the wings, the legs, the various faces in strange union—are only presentations of natural objects in new conjunctions. Our angels, in the same way, are only beautiful human figures; our heaven is only a succession of exquisite earthly landscapes. We cannot, indeed, avoid transferring our ordinary ideas to the future world. Accustomed to cities, we raise a great city of God in our imaginations of the future, just as in an age or region where cities were unknown, we might have pictured heaven as a garden, like Eden.

To Ezekiel and his contemporaries, the grand future in store for the nation could only be a glorious renovation of the sacred past. The Temple, the forms of public service, the maintenance of the priests, the divisions of the land among the tribes, the establishment of the expected Ruler, and all else, might vary in details from the practice of former times, but must repeat their leading characteristics. Yet the descriptions in which the prophet sets them before us were only visions, not literal anticipations. Looking forward into the magnificent Messianic future, he paints it in such imagery as alone was possible to him, or comprehensible by his nation. It was left for after ages to read the true meaning by fuller spiritual light, and separate the material symbol from the truth it embodied.

That the pictures of the restored land are only to be regarded as the scenery of prophetic dreams or visions is clear. I may quote a few proofs. Three thousand cubits are stated as the extent of the precincts of the New Temple on Mount Moriah, but that hill could not possibly afford a space equal to 1,500 yards,[1] or nearly seven-

[1] Ezek. xlii. 19, 20. Conder makes the cubit sixteen inches (*Handbook*, p. 37). Other estimates make it eighteen or twenty inches. *Dict. of the Bible*, vol. ii. p. 1737.

eighths of a mile square. Nor can the priestly laws he announces be viewed as intended for an authoritative code, since they were disregarded after the return from Babylon. Thus Zerubbabel, and Joshua the high priest, followed the old Mosaic rules, not those of Ezekiel, in consecrating the Temple,[1] disregarding even the day named for the great solemnity by the prophet—the first of the first month,[2] for which they substituted the first of the seventh.[3] If, besides, there are resemblances between the Temple of Ezekiel and that of Solomon, there are also striking contrasts. The former was to be north of Jerusalem;[4] the other rose to the south of the city. In the new sanctuary numerous chambers were to be provided for the priests and Levites while on duty; and the sacred order was no longer, as of old, to be scattered in separate communities through the country, but in a special district assigned to it. The territories allotted by the prophet to the Messiah Prince comprise almost the whole centre of the land, and they cannot be alienated; to prevent alike the impoverishment of the Crown, or an excuse for its encroachment on the lands of the people.[5] Equal divisions of the country are assigned to the different tribes, that none might envy its neighbours.[6] In contrast to the exclusiveness of the past, lands are set apart, between those of the tribes, for aliens, that no one willing to work might suffer poverty. The prince is required to provide the offerings and necessaries of the Temple, and thus secure the due performance of public worship; rich gifts to him being demanded from the community, that this may not be burdensome. New laws, moreover, are prescribed for the Temple service and for the priests. But

[1] Ezek. xlv. 18. Ezra iii. 2.
[2] Ezek. xlvi. 18.
[3] Ezra iii. 1–6.
[4] Ezek. xl. 2.
[5] Ezek. xlv. 8.
[6] Ezek. xlvii. 14.

in none of these vital points was there even an attempt after the Return, to realize Ezekiel's ideal. It was seen to be only a fitting close to the marvellous visions so peculiar to him.

If further proof were wanted that this glorious reconstitution of Israel and its territory was only a glowing picture of the imagination, it is supplied by the features with which it closes. The prophet anticipates the return of a golden age. Jerusalem, the capital of the new Messianic kingdom, is to be transformed into a second Eden. A river of living water from the Temple hill will turn even the desolation of the wilderness of Judea into beauty and fertility. How far he may have expected as the immediate result of the return from Babylon, such a happy and blameless community, in a country miraculously glorified, is difficult to tell. Even the Apostles looked for the speedy return of our Lord, with all its wondrous results, though it was to be long deferred; and in the same way Ezekiel, warmed by patriotic and religious enthusiasm, may have fondly dreamed that his splendid visions would be realized as soon as his people were re-established in their own land. For neither apostles nor prophets could read the times of fulfilment of the great purposes of God.

It was on the tenth of Nisan, "the beginning of the" fourteenth "year,"[1] after the fall of the Holy City—the twenty-fifth of his own exile, that the closing cycle of his visions was vouchsafed to Ezekiel. The day was that on which preparations began for the Passover, commemorating the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, and thus, beyond all others, naturally awoke thoughts of the great future of the kingdom of God, when rescued from its present Captivity. Years before, "as he sat in

[1] Ezek. xl. 1.

his house" at Tel Abib, in the company of the elders of Judah, he had fallen into a trance, in which he seemed to be supernaturally borne to Jerusalem, and placed in the midst of the Temple courts.[1] In the same way it appeared now as if he had been carried away to Judah, and set down on a very high mountain on which was a town, towards the south. It was Mount Zion, or rather Moriah, on which the Temple of Solomon had stood; now apparently raised above all the hills around,[2] in accordance with the vision of Micah, though actually it is much lower. A being in form like a man, but resplendent with golden light, stood, with a cord of flax and a measuring rod in his hand, at one of the gates of a great temple, and proceeded to measure its various parts. The enclosing walls; the gates; the tables, eight in number, on which the beasts for sacrifice were to be slaughtered; the chambers for the subordinate necessities of the Temple service, for the singers, and for the priests; the magnificent porch; the various courts; the thickness of the walls, and their height; the doors and their posts, were all in turn measured, and the details written down minutely by the prophet. The inner walls of the Temple and its inner doors were seen to be sculptured with alternate cherubim and palm trees; an altar of wood stood in the Holy Place, and there were numerous cells or chambers, in some of which the priests would eat the parts of the "holy things" that fell to their share, while others were store-rooms for the materials of the various offerings,[3] or robing chambers for the officiating ministers of the altar.

Hardly, however, had the angel finished all the measuring, before the glory of Jehovah appeared advancing

[1] Ezek. viii. 1-3. [2] Micah iv. 1. Isa. ii. 2.
[3] Ezek. xlii. 13

towards the east gate, by which it had left the sanctuary in the former vision,[1] its splendour lighting up the earth before it, while a mighty sound, like that of many waters, heralded its approach. Presently the sacred building was filled with this blinding glory, the symbol of the presence of Jehovah, and Ezekiel heard a voice saying to him, as he stood in the inner or priests' court:—

7 Son of man![2] Behold this is the place of My throne, the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever! The House of Israel will no more defile My holy name, neither they nor their kings, by their impurity,[3] or by the dead bodies of their kings, in their funeral vaults.[4]

Manasseh and Amon had been buried in the royal gardens,[5] close to the southern end of the Temple; but such a desecration of the sacred hill would no longer be permitted in the approaching stricter age.

8 For they used to set their thresholds close to Mine, and their door-posts by My posts, with only a wall between Me and them, and thus they defiled My holy name, by the abominations they committed close to My house, so that I consumed them in My anger. 9 But now they will put away their foul idolatry, and the dead bodies of their kings, far from Me, and I will dwell among them for ever.

The prophet is then directed to tell his people what he has seen—the structure and details of the Temple, with all the laws and ordinances to be communicated to him respecting it—if they show the proper spirit of penitence and obedience.[6] Instructions for the consecration of the new altar follow,[7] showing some variations from that of the

[1] Ezek. x. 19; xi. 1, 23.
[2] Ezek. xliii. 7, 8.
[3] Their idolatry.
[4] Some read, "after their death."
[5] 2 Kings xxi. 18–26.
[6] Ezek. xliii. 10, 11.
[7] Ezek. xliii. 18.

altar of the Tabernacle or of Solomon's Temple, though for the most part the same.[1] The officiating priests, in this and all other cases, however, are limited to the descendants of Zadok,[2] the representative of the elder branch of the family of Aaron, who since the time of David had superseded the line of Eli, which was that of Ithamar, Aaron's younger son.[3] Special rules are laid down for them, some of which are striking. In the old, irregular times, carelessness and indifference had marked the services of the slaves attached to the temple —the descendants of the Gibeonites, condemned by Joshua to be hewers of wood and drawers of water,[4] and the "slaves of Solomon"[5]—apparently captives taken in war, whom David, Solomon, and the dignitaries of the Temple had used in the menial duties of public worship. They were no longer to be thus employed. Descended from uncircumcised aliens, they were not to be allowed to enter the new sanctuary of the Messiah's kingdom.[6] Henceforward, only priests and Levites should minister

[1] Exod. xxix. 37. Lev. viii. 33. 2 Chron. vii. 9.

[2] Zadok was the son of Ahitub, of the line of Eleazar (1 Chron. xxiv. 3), and remained faithful to David during the rebellion of Absalom (2 Sam. xv. 24). He also anointed Solomon in opposition to Adonijah (1 Kings i. 32). The high priest, Abiathar, on the other hand—a dignitary descended from the line of Ithamar, Eli's line—supported Adonijah (1 Kings vii. 25), and was removed on this account from his office by Solomon, Zadok being put in his place; the new line thus established retaining the dignity to the fall of the kingdom.

[3] If, as some critics allege, the separation of the tribe of Levi into priests and Levites was made, not at Sinai, but after the Exile, how does it happen that Ezekiel lays stress on this line of Zadok as the rightful priests? Their claim rests on something before David's time—what could it be but the appointment by Moses?

[4] Josh. ix. 27.

[5] Ezra viii. 20. Neh. vii. 60.

[6] Ezek. xlix. 6–9.

in God's house. But even among these, such as in the past had lent themselves to idolatry, were no longer to discharge the higher duties of their office, but to be confined to the humblest services. None but the descendants of Zadok should act as priests at the altar and in the sanctuary, because they had kept themselves free from all taint of heathenism.[1] The unfaithful priests should only be keepers of the gates, and servants to the people when offerings were presented—killing the victims; a task till now permitted to any offerer. As under the old law in Exodus,[2] the dress of the new priests was to be exclusively linen, that they might not be polluted by the heat of woollen garments.[3] Their full official dress, moreover, was only to be worn while they were actually on duty, and was to be laid aside before leaving their own court in the Temple, that the people might not be burdened by being required to be always Levitically clean, which would otherwise be imperative, lest the "holy garments" might touch them.[4] Their hair was neither to be shaved off nor let grow without trimming, but was to be kept carefully cut.[5] As of old, in the laws of Leviticus, they were to drink no wine when on duty.[6] Hitherto only the high priest had been forbidden to marry a widow;[7] now it was prohibited to all priests,

[1] By "Levites," in Ezekiel xliv. 10, are meant all descendants of Levi—priests or "Levites." Members of both classes had supported heathenism, and were now to be degraded. This is implied in the expression "they shall bear (the penalty of) their iniquity." The fidelity of the descendants of Zadok is noticed (Ezek. xliv. 15). They "kept the charge of My sanctuary when," etc.

[2] Exod. xxviii. 42.

[3] Ezek. xliv. 17, 18.

[4] See Lev. vi. 11–20. Ezek. xlvi. 20. Exod. xxix. 37; xxx 29.

[5] Ezek. xliv. 20. Lev. xxi. 5, 10.

[6] Ezek. xliv. 21. Lev. x. 9.

[7] Lev. xxi. 14.

except in the case of a priest's widow.[1] The whole order was thus to be specially guarded from even the appearance of laxity. Their general duty was declared to be teaching the people the distinction of holy and unholy, clean and unclean,[2] and to act as judges in all disputes, deciding according to the Law, as they had hitherto done in specified cases.[3] At the great religious festivals, they were to see that all the requirements of the Law were complied with, and they were to take care that the Sabbath was duly honoured. The old statute[4] respecting their being defiled by coming near a dead body was re-enacted, but it was added, that even in cases when their presence beside the corpse of a relative had been hitherto permitted, the subsequent necessary purification and suspension from duty for seven days were now insufficient, and a fortnight's suspension was substituted. So "holy" were they to be under the Messiah. For these duties they were to receive corresponding emoluments. They were no longer, as in the past, to have glebes in common, though they were to have ground for their houses,[5] but were to be supported by a share of the sacrifices and offerings, and from the tithes and first-fruits, which belonged to Jehovah, and were made over to the priests as His public servants.[6] The prohibition to eat that which had died of itself or had been torn by beasts was continued.[7]

Directions follow as to the space in the land to be set

[1] Ezek. xliv. 22.

[2] Lev. x. 10. Deut. xxxiii. 10. Ezek. xxii. 26 or xliv. 23.

[3] Deut. xvii. 8; xix. 7; xxi. 5. Ezek. xliv. 24.

[4] Lev. xxi. 1–3.

[5] Ezek. xliv. 29–31; xlv. 4.

[6] Comp. Lev. ii. 3; vi. 9, 11, 19; vii. 6, 7; xxvii. 21. Exod. xxiii. 19; xxxiv. 26. Deut. xviii. 4. Num. xviii. 13; xv. 19; xviii. 19; xv. 20, 21.

[7] Lev. xxii. 8; xvii. 15.

apart to Jehovah, after the division of the country among the tribes.[1] A tract measuring,[2] apparently, about seven miles from east to west, and three from north to south, was to be marked off for the Temple, the priests and the Levites, and on each side of this a space of the same breadth for the prince; stretching from one side of the country to the other. With this, the future king was to content himself, refraining from all oppression, and honouring Jehovah by a just and noble reign.[3] But this separation of a sacred and a royal district from the rest of the country, was never attempted; the whole vision being treated as outside the sphere of practical politics or economics. After insisting on just weights and measures,[4] the prophet prescribes the public contributions to be made to the prince for the temple offerings and sacrifices, which were to be primarily under his care.[5] Then follow rules as to the sacrifices for people and prince, and for the festivals, showing many curious variations from the parallel Mosaic laws.[6] The feast of Pentecost, however, is wholly omitted and so are the sounding of the trumpets on the first, and the Day of

[1] Ezek. xlv.

[2] Keil and some others, think 25,000 "reeds" intended, but cubits seem to be implied (Ezek. xlv. 1). The space is very great if reeds are meant—42 miles by 17.

[3] Ezek. xlv. 9.

[4] The "bath" in Ezek. xlv. was a fluid measure, the "ephah" a dry measure. See vol. iv. p. 304. The various shekels named are shekels of different weight.

[5] Ezek. xlv. 13–17.

[6] Ezekiel commands the offering of a young bullock as a sin-offering on the first day of the first month. Moses had commanded the offering of a he-goat, in addition to the burnt and meat-offering (Num. xxviii. 15). He also ordered a special sin-offering in the new moon of the seventh month, but instead of this, Ezekiel appoints sin-offerings for the first and seventh days of the first month (Ezek. xlv. 21, 22). The blood also is to be sprinkled on the door posts of the forecourts, instead of on the

Atonement on the tenth, of the seventh month ;[1] a very strange fact if Ezekiel, according to the new criticism, was the true founder of Judaism and its Levitical laws.

The rules for the respective shares of the prince, and the people, in public worship, are next given. The east gate of the new temple[2] was to be shut during the week, but open on the Sabbath and the day of the new moon, and the prince was to enter by this outer gate, and stand at the gate of the priests' court within, worshipping Jehovah from the gate while the sacrifices were being offered on the altar, and then leaving by the way he entered. The people also were to worship before this inner gate on the Sabbaths and new moons.[3] Details are given of the

horns of the altar and towards the mercy seat. Moses knows nothing of such a universal offering for the people as Ezekiel orders on the seventh of the first month (Lev. iv.–vi.) Instead of seven oxen and seven rams daily (Ezek. xlv. 23), Moses appoints two oxen, one ram and seven lambs (Num. xxviii. 19). The meat-offering (Ezek. xlv. 24) is different from that prescribed by Moses (Num. xxviii. 20); and the solemnities for the Passover and Tabernacles in Ezekiel also vary from the ancient directions. At Tabernacles, Moses commands that the number of oxen offered, lessen with each day—thirteen, twelve, eleven, and so on (Num. xxix. 13 ff.). Moses ordered two rams only to be offered; Ezekiel seven; and he omits altogether the fourteen lambs offered under the old law (Num. xxix. 13). Nor has he said anything of those appointed for the Passover and Tabernacles, though they could not be dispensed with. Ezra did not follow Ezekiel's laws. (Compare Ezra iii. 1-6; Ezek. xlv. 18.)

[1] Ezek. xlv. 21–25. [2] Ezek. xlvi.

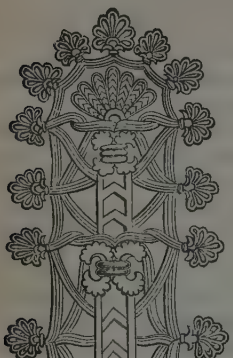
[3] Moses orders only two sheep to be offered on the Sabbath. Ezekiel requires six sheep and a ram to be offered (Num. xxviii. 9; Ezek. xlvi. 5). The prophet leaves the "meat-offering" to the ability of the offerers; Moses leaves nothing to choice (Num. xxviii. 9). In contrast with the young ox, six sheep and one ram, of Ezek. xlvi. 6; Moses enjoins two oxen and seven sheep (Num. xxviii. 11).

gates through which people and prince are to enter and leave on different occasions; so apparently trifling a matter seeming weighty to a mind essentially ritualistic, like that of Ezekiel. The evening sacrifice is not mentioned, and the regulations for that of each morning differ from those of Moses.[1] Even the cells in which the priests were to boil and bake the various offerings not burnt on the altar, are described, since they were part of the Temple arrangements. Brief laws for gifts and inheritances, granted by the prince, close the legislative portion of the narrative, so strange in all its features.

The triumphant return, the victory over all enemies, the glory of the new Temple, the laws of worship, and the dignity of the future Messiah king had now been recounted. But could it be thought that the new Jerusalem, which was to be so much grander than the old, would be allowed to stand in the midst of a district bare and waterless like the territory of Judah, especially on its eastern side? Nature around must be in keeping with so much glory. The sanctuary was to be in the noblest sense the earthly habitation of Jehovah; the land therefore in which it stood must be a second Paradise. Hence, as rich streams watered Eden, so, here, an abundant flood poured forth from under the threshold of the Temple, swelling speedily to a great river as it flowed towards the east, the Temple itself having an eastern aspect. Dividing ere long into various streams,[2] like the river of Paradise, these made even the great and terrible wilderness of Judah fruitful and lovely. Emptying themselves at last into the Dead Sea, they sweetened the bitter waters, and filled them with life, so that thenceforward fishermen could ply their trade on its hitherto lonely shores.

[1] Num. xxviii. 4, 5. Ezek. xlvi. 13. 14.
[2] Ezek. xlviii. 9.

Wherever the streams reached, fertility and life would rise, while their banks on both sides would be lined with all kinds of fruit trees, whose leaf never faded, and from whose branches the clusters would always be hanging, for each month they would yield new crops, while their fruit would be for food, and their very leaves for healing.[1]



The Assyrian Tree of Life.

In a land, the most barren parts of which were to be thus delightful, the Twelve Tribes would find a joyful home; half of them occupying the land to the south of the Temple, and half of them that towards the north.[2] The thirsty Negeb, or South Country, as well as the terrible desert of Judah, would be turned into fertile uplands.

The bounds of the Holy Land in these blissful times are next described. On the north it will reach from the Mediterranean, south of Hamath on the Orontes, to the Hauran below Damascus; on the east, to the south end of the Dead Sea, enclosing Gilead and the old territory of the tribes across the Jordan; on the south it will stretch from "Tamar," somewhere near the head of the Red Sea, to Kadesh in the Negeb, and thence, on to the Mediterranean; and on the west, from this point "till a man come over against Hamath."[3] These bounds, it is needless to say, Israel never possessed after the Return.

[1] Rev. xxii. 2. [2] Ezek. xlvii. and xlviii.
[3] Ezek. xlvii. 20.

In this great territory the Twelve Tribes were to hold portions reaching, in each case, from east to west, across the whole land; seven of them on the north of the section in the centre of the land, made over to the Temple, the priests and the prince; the rest on the south of it. All, moreover, were to live on the west of the Jordan, though of old only nine and a half tribes had done so. The New Jerusalem was to be 4,500 "reeds," or 9,000 yards—a little over five miles—square,[1] and the names of its twelve gates were to be those of the twelve tribes of Israel.[2]

This abstract is in itself overwhelming proof that the whole wondrous vision is only the picture of a condition of surpassing glory, expressed in imagery peculiar to the prophet. No one thinks of taking the almost parallel visions of St. John in the Apocalypse as literal descriptions. We do not expect to see the holy city, the New Jerusalem, actually coming down from God, out of heaven,[3] nor that it will literally be foursquare, with walls and gates like an ancient town, nor that the walls will be over 200 feet high, or the city itself 1,500 miles square, or that its buildings and spires will rise 1,500 miles into the air,[4] and yet this must be done, if the description is to be understood otherwise than figuratively. To Ezekiel and St. John alike, the only aim was to convey the highest conception of magnificence as each imagined it most vividly presented. Living in the age of Rome and great provincial cities, St. John thinks of a New Jerusalem such as he describes. Embued with a strongly Jewish and priestly bias, Ezekiel sees a glorious temple rise before him, and all the details of a re-establishment of

[1] Ezek. xlviii. 30. A reed = 6 cubits, *Dictionary of Bible*, Art. Reed.

[2] Rev. xxi. 12.

[3] Rev. xxi. 2–10.

[4] Rev. xxi. 16.

the Theocracy in Palestine, with transcendent splendour. To the mind of St. John, the Temple had ceased to be a central religious thought; in that of Ezekiel, the priest, it was supreme. In both, the inspired writer is left free to express the surpassing glory of the Messianic age in the only way possible to his modes of thought, and the ideas of his age.

Recent critics have sought to make Ezekiel the father of Judaism; but, as already shown, it is much more correct to trace it to King Josiah.[1] The evidence urged for the new theory, not only does not harmonize with the actual facts, but is distinctly contrary to them. Whatever seems to support it is put forward prominently; whatever tells against it, is at once, lightly declared unhistorical. The narratives of the Pentateuch are pronounced to be legends of the time of the Exile or later; the genealogies of the Books of Chronicles mere tricks of the priests; the historical psalms only legends thrown into poetical form, though, Ezekiel, Esra, and Nehemiah, who were alive when these legends are said to have risen, treat them as actual events well known in the distant history of the nation. It is easy to establish any theory if one deal as he pleases with what contradicts it. But to do so, on an arbitrary estimate of what seems reasonable to a biassed critic, is unsafe in the extreme; for one school rejects that which another, not less entitled to confidence, accepts as trustworthy.

The supposition of the new school is, that Ezekiel having given an impulse to Judaism by his writings, it was developed during the exile in Babylon, by unknown writers, who invented the system now found in Leviticus and other sections of the Pentateuch, and palmed them off on their contemporaries as having come down from the days

[1] Vol. v. p. 277.

of Moses. But nothing whatever is known of any such ecclesiastical forgers having ever existed in Babylonia. The whole theory is a mere assumption, supported by not even a tittle of historical evidence. Nor is this the worst. According to the latest advanced critics, the inventors of the "Priestly Torah," that is, of the Levitical legislation, almost as a whole, commended it to public respect, and introduced it to the worship of God and the practice of daily life, as of Divine origin, while they knew it was not. They invented the whole story of the law-giving on Mount Sinai, the construction of the Tabernacle, the separation of the tribe of Levi to the priesthood, of the conquest of Eastern Palestine, and much else, to induce the people to accept as laws given directly from heaven, more than a thousand years before, what they had themselves secretly concocted in Babylon! The latest historian[1] of Israel, indeed, carries this so far, as to pronounce the whole narrative of the stay in Egypt, the Exodus, the wilderness sojourn, the existence of the Tabernacle, the conquest of Eastern Palestine, the record of Joshua, that of the Judges, and even that of Saul, mere worthless legends of late date, which he passes over with contemptuous silence!

This "Priestly Torah," invented in Babylon, was brought, we are told, to Palestine, on the return from Captivity, and having been read aloud to the people, was accepted by them, though hitherto entirely unknown, as the ancient religious law of the nation, observed by their fathers. But, supposing so gigantic an imposition on a bigoted and ultra-conservative race in any case possible, we should expect that it would be specially prominent in books like those of Ezra and Nehemiah, who were most exacting in ritual, and that allusions to it would abound

[1] Stade, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel.*

in their pages. On the contrary, however, we nowhere find it mentioned. The covenant to which the returned exiles bound themselves has no connection, strange to say, with ceremonial law, but pledges them, as its great points, to abstain from marriage with others than their own race, and to keep the Sabbath,[1] duties enforced by laws which confessedly do not belong to the so-called "Priestly Torah" at all, but to the earliest days of Jewish history.

[1] Exod. xxxiv.

# CHAPTER XIII.

## AT BABYLON.

AMONG the captives led off from Judea by Nebuchadnezzar, in B.C. 605, immediately after his great victory over the Egyptians at Carchemish, were a number of youths of the best Jewish families, transferred to Babylon for service at court; it may be, in compliment to members of the Chaldean party in Jerusalem, or, possibly, as hostages for the good behaviour of the city. Among these was the future prophet Daniel,[1] of unknown, but evidently illustrious origin. He first comes before us while still in his opening prime, but even then is marked not only by his physical beauty and intelligence, but even more strikingly by his strength of character[2] and religious fervour and sincerity. Exile in his case,[3] and in that of others of his class, was, in reality, the highest good fortune, giving them an opening in life

[1] "One who judges in the name of God." [2] Dan. i. 3.

[3] The year is given in Dan. i. 1, as the third of Jehoiakim. But in Jer. xxv. 1, the fourth year of Jehoiakim is stated to have been the first of Nebuchadnezzar, and he is said to have defeated Pharaoh Necho at Carchemish in that year (Jerem. xlvi. 2). Delitzsch explains the apparent contradiction by referring to 2 Kings xxiv. 1, from which he understands that the third year of Jehoiakim means the third year of his vassalage to Nebu-

at the court of the greatest monarch of the age, and under his special favour.

The kings of Assyria and Babylon, in order the more easily to govern their subjects of different races and languages, were accustomed to select from the captives or hostages of each nation, young men of noble birth,[1] and bring them up in the royal palace, where they were put in charge of the chief of the eunuchs,[2] and received

chadnezzar (*Herzog*, 2te Auf., art. Daniel). Dan. i. 1 is held by Zöckler and Delitzsch as noting the time when the campaign began, which ended, next year, in the submission of Jerusalem. In the third year the Chaldean army was set in motion, in the fourth, the battle of Carchemish opened the way to Palestine, and then followed the march to it, all during the reign of Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar's father. *Herzog*, 1te Auf., art. Daniel. Zöckler's *Daniel*, p. 28. Keil's *Einleitung*, p. 410.

The reckoning of the years of a reign, it should be remembered, is often different. Queen Victoria ascended the throne in June, 1837, but was not crowned till June, 1838. Her reign might be counted from either date, if custom allowed, and it may have been thus in Palestine. Further, 1838 might be called either the first or second year of her reign, according to the months intended. Up to June it was the first year; after that it was the second. In the *Speaker's Commentary* the dates are harmonised as follows: Expedition against Pharaoh Necho, twentieth year of Nabopolassar = second of Jehoiakim. Battle of Carchemish, twenty-first of Nabopolassar, third of Jehoiakim. Pursuit of Necho, first year of Nebuchadnezzar = fourth year of Jehoiakim.

[1] "Princes" (Dan. i. 3). The word thus translated is not Hebrew, but from the Sanscrit, and shows a time and place where there was contact between the Semitic and Aryan races, as in the case of Babylon with Media and Persia. It occurs here, and twice in Esther.

[2] Ashpenaz is equivalent to Assu-ibni-Tir ("The Lady Istar, the goddess, formed him in the womb"). Such a name speaks for itself as only possible while Istar was yet honoured—that is, while Babylon still flourished. Lenormant's *La Divination*, p. 183.

the highest education the age afforded. Thus in the inscriptions of Sennacherib, we accidentally learn that he had such a school in his palace at Nineveh, for the children of nobles of his foreign provinces. "Belibus," he tells us, "of the race of Babylon, who had been brought up from early childhood in my palace, was set by me over the kingdom of the Sumirs and Accadians."[1] This custom of the kings of Assyria and Babylon, thus illustrated by the inscriptions of Nineveh, till these records came to light, was known to us only from the Book of Daniel, the exact local colouring of which in this instance, as in so many others, is so singularly vindicated by the testimony of contemporary documents. A similar practice in Turkey, while still a conquering power, has been noticed by various travellers. The pages of the seraglio, the officers of court, and most of the public functionaries and local governors, were drawn from a body of Christian youths taken captive in war, or bought as slaves. The finest and cleverest were sent to the palace, and put in charge of the chief of the white eunuchs, though they themselves were not mutilated. Schools were provided, at which they received the best education the country could give, including a perfect knowledge of Turkish in its greatest purity. Their food was carefully prescribed, and they wore a special dress as cadets in the royal service. Guardians watched them night and day, and reported on their conduct and attainments, by which their future advancement was determined.[2] A curious proof of similar arrangements at

[1] *Cylinder of Bellino*, i. 13. Smith's *Sennacherib*, p. 27. Smith's *History of Assyria*, p. 111. *Records of the Past*, vol. i. p. 23.

[2] Habesci's *Ottoman Empire*, and Tavernier's *Relation, etc.*, quoted in *Pict. Bible*, vol. iii. p. 213.

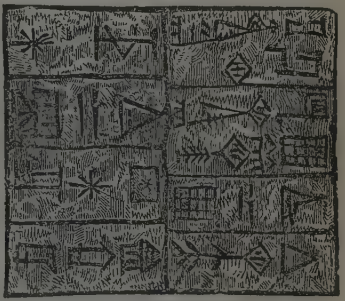
Nineveh and Babylon has come to light in the examination of the clay tablets brought in vast numbers from the library of Assurbanipal of Nineveh. They are found to have been mainly intended for the use of the masters and pupils of the palace school, where the youth of both sexes were trained for the royal service. A large proportion of them consists of syllabaries, grammars, dictionaries, histories, geographies, and scientific manuals. Even the exercises and tasks of the scholars have in some cases been recovered; one tablet among others containing the lesson for a young princess in Assyrian reading and spelling.[1] It was indeed no light matter to become an adept even in the living language of Assyria or Babylon, with its multitudinous combinations of arrow-headed or wedge-shaped characters, different pronunciations of which gave wholly different meanings to the same word. But another language, the Accadian, which had long ceased to be spoken, needed to be thoroughly mastered, to acquire a liberal education, all the venerable treatises on the gods, on science, and on magic, being preserved in it alone. It was, in fact, the "language of the Chaldeans,"[2] and Daniel, as a student, had specially

CUNEIFORM INSCRIPTION.—Warka.

[1] It is in the British Museum. [2] Dan. i. 4, 17.

to apply himself to it; the "Chaldean language" of Bible times,[1] used in parts of the Book of Daniel itself,[2] being then known as Aramean.

The illustrations of "Daniel" from the monuments and tablets, are numerous. Thus, the change of name given to the young prophet and his companions on entering the palace school, was in accordance with the custom of the age. Psammetichus, the famous king of Egypt, when living in Nineveh, had an Assyrian name given him by Assurbanipal.[3] Similarly, that of Daniel was changed to Balatsu-usur or Belteshazzar, "(Bel) protect his life," and that of one of his companions from Azariah to Abed-nebo—"the servant of (the god) Nebo,"[4] which frequently occurs in Assyrian documents.[5] Shadrach and Meshach, his other associates, have had their names so changed in the Hebrew trans-



ANCIENT HIERATIC, OR SACRED WRITING.—Warka.

[1] The use of the word "Chaldeans," as equivalent to "wise men," is unknown in the Assyrian or Babylonian inscriptions and records. It rose only after the destruction of the Babylonian empire. Schrader, *Keilinschriften*, 2te Auf., 1882, p. 429.

[2] Dan. ii. 4, 12.

[3] Lenormant, *Lettres Assyriologiques*, vol. i. p. 56. Oppert, *Mémoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions, etc., etc.* 8 partie, vol. i. p. 595. The name was Nabû-Sezibanni.

[4] *K. I.*, 2te Auf. (1882), p. 430. Abednego should be Abednebo.

[5] *La Divination*, p. 182. The dignitary called "chief of the eunuchs," had under him an official called "the Melzar" (Da. in.

cription as to obscure their original form, but we have the authority of so competent a scholar as Lenormant for saying that "all these names, when not altered beyond recovery by the errors of copyists, are strictly Babylonian, and could not have been invented in Palestine in the second century before Christ," the date to which the composition of the Book of Daniel is sometimes referred.

Three years spent in the training school of the palace sufficed to advance Daniel to high proficiency in the "wisdom" of the day. In one point, however, he steadily resisted the influences around him. It was taken for granted that he and his companions would adopt the religion of Babylon; but nothing could induce him to abandon the faith of his fathers, even in a matter so subordinate as its prescriptions respecting food. As a high honour, the palace-school cadets were supplied from the royal table; but Daniel and his companions shrank from eating or drinking anything "unclean" in itself, or from having been consecrated to idols. This made it impossible for them to touch anything brought from the table of the king, all the food or drink on which was first dedicated to the gods, by the offering of part of it on their altars.[1] At the risk of life, therefore, they would not taste such viands. Men, even in their youth so bravely faithful to their consciences, could not fail one day to rouse the nation to a new religious life, by the quickening power of their example.

11), and both are frequently mentioned in the Assyrian tablets. "The Melzar," seems to have been the chief butler. *Lenormant*, pp. 196–7.

[1] Keil, *Daniel*, p. 64. The laws of Levitical purity were thus known before the Exile, not invented after it, as the new critics affirm.

The city in which Daniel thus found himself, was the greatest in the ancient world. Herodotus, who visited it about B.C. 450, within a century after the departure of the Hebrews, while its walls and buildings were still perfect, describes it as forming a square of nearly fourteen miles on each side.[1] Others[2] give a different measurement, but the smallest leaves a space of over ten miles square within the walls, which is four times more than that covered by intramural Paris, and fully twice as great as the size of London within the bills of mortality.

The greatness of Babylon was largely due to its position. Built on a broad and level shelf of tertiary rock, which spread out from under the rich soil of the wide plains, the last trace of the northern hill system, it enjoyed a healthy and secure site, even amidst the periodical inundations around. Defended on the south by the broad waters of the united Euphrates and Tigris, which ere long widened into those of the Persian Gulf, then reaching much farther north than at present, the wide stretches of the desert protected it on all other sides. High prosperity, also, was secured by its position, for it stood on the great line of trade between the Mediterranean and the East, at the point where the Euphrates contracts, from a broad expanse, to the full current of a deep and magnificent stream, bearing down to the wharves of the great city the wealth of the north, as the waters on the south bore from the ocean that of India, and Africa. There was no stone for its mansions and houses, but the deep clay of the plains was easily made

[1] *Herod.*, i. 178; 120 stadia on each side.

[2] *Strabo*, xvi. 1, § 5. Q. Curtius, *Vit. Alex. Mag.*, v. 1. *Clitarchus*, in *Diod. Sic.*, xi. 7, § 3. Ebers gives the circuit of Babylon as more than 45 miles. *Æg. Königstochter*, vol. ii. p. 16.

into sun-dried bricks, and the bitumen of the north, brought down the river, supplied cement.

The walls of this gigantic hive of men were in keeping with the vast limits they enclosed. Rising out of great moats on every side, they towered, in the opinion of Herodotus and others, three hundred feet into the air,[1] while their breadth was such that chariots with four horses could pass each other on the wide top,[2] which was said to have been fully eighty feet across. Such a wondrous girdle of defence from the tribes of the desert or more civilized enemies, must have involved an almost inconceivable amount of labour. Constructed of burnt bricks, alternating with layers of reeds to bind them together, and cemented with bitumen, the walls contained, without including 250 towers which rose above them, not less than 5,560,000,000 square feet, and were built up of at least three times that number of the largest bricks used by the Babylonians.[3] A hundred gates with their great posts, leaves, and sills, of brass, and their bars of iron, permitted entrance to the city.[4] There were also

[1] *Diod. Sic.*, following Ctesias, adopts the estimate of Herodotus. Others speak of them as but 255 or even but 75 feet high, but this last account was taken from their appearance long after the city had become a ruin. *Herod.*, i. 178. *Diod. Sic.*, ii. 7, § 3. *Plin. H. N.*, vi. 26. *Strabo*, xvi. 1, § 5. See Jer. li. 58. Ebers thinks however that 75 feet was the full height when the walls were perfect. *Æg. Königstochter.*

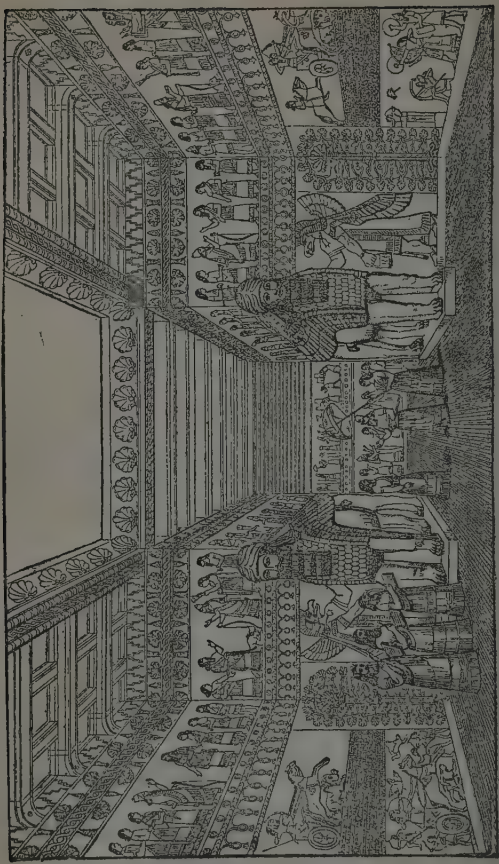
[2] It is possible that slanting ascents made it practicable to drive chariots to the top, where a parapet protected the sides. Such a slope is used inside the church of St. Sophia, at Constantinople, to reach the galleries.

[3] Canon Rawlinson computes that 18,765,000,000 of the largest bricks would be needed. *Expositor*, 1883, p. 349. Ebers says that these walls were a greater wonder than even the Pyramids. *Æg. Königstochter*, vol. ii. p. 16.

[4] See Isa. xlv. 2.

inner walls on each side of the river, with huge gates at the end of each of the broad and wide streets which ran towards the stream, alongside which handsome quays stretched out for trade and embellishment. A ferry-boat plied across the river from each gate; and a drawbridge, raised at night, offered further accommodation to the citizens. Inside this space the ordinary houses of the inhabitants rose, in many cases, three or four[1] storeys high; but they sank into insignificance when compared with the great palace-quarter of the kings, which itself was a city seven miles round. Three or four vast buildings stood within its enclosure,[2] the wall of which Herodotus tells us was "very little inferior in strength" to that of the city itself.[3] The size of the royal dwellings may be judged from the fact that the mound from which one of them towered up covers thirty-seven acres,[4] while another, still known as the Kasr, or "Palace," is 800 yards long by 600 yards broad.[5] Near the centre of this gigantic platform, which, though seventy feet high, was only the artificial terrace on which the vast fabric stood, a fragment of the palace itself still rises. Walls, piers, and buttresses of brick masonry, wonderfully preserved, and in some parts adorned with pilasters, still help to bring before us perhaps the very building in which Daniel spent his best years; but the ruins are too fragmentary to yield any clue to the plan of the structure as a whole. It doubtless, however, contained a labyrinth of courts, great halls, galleries and smaller chambers, gorgeous with colours, or lined with sculptures or paintings, of scenes of war and of the chase.[6] Even the out-

[1] *Herod.*, i. 180. [2] Oppert says four. [3] *Herod.*, i. 181.
[4] Oppert, *Expedition scientifique*, vol. i. p. 157.
[5] It is to be remembered that 880 yards are half a mile.
[6] Ezek. xxxii. 14, 15.



Interior of an Assyrian or Babylonian Palace.

side walls, indeed, were resplendent with the brightest colours, countless fragments of their bricks still remaining covered with a thick enamel, over brilliant blue, red, yellow, and black.[1]

The palace gardens were one of the wonders of the world. Nebuchadnezzar had married a Median princess, and thinking that she sighed for her native mountains when looking out on the dull level of the Babylonian plains, resolved to beguile her of her longing for home, and at the same time show how much he loved her, by commanding that wooded hills should be created in the "paradise" of her palace. Arch upon arch of masonry forthwith rose like a pyramid, to the height of 400 feet, over a square of equal size each way, as the frame-work of a vast accumulation of artificial mounds and hills of earth, on which waved forest trees of huge diameter, transplanted in their full glory, and thickets of flowering shrubs, interspersed with cool chambers, royally furnished, at successive heights. To make the charm complete, flowing streams glided along each terrace and sparkled down every slope, amongst the groves and woods; the water for them being raised to the summits by hydraulic machinery.[2]

[1] Layard, *Nineveh and Babylon*, p. 507.

[2] Oppert considers the Mound Amran—now an irregular mass, 542 yards long on one side, 330 on the other, and 433 broad—is what remains of the hanging gardens. For notices of these gardens, see Ebers, *Æg. Königstochter*, vol. i. p. 121; vol. ii. p. 250. The mound known as the Kasr, or Palace, stretches 2,400 feet long, and 1,800 broad, along the banks of the Euphrates. This amazing heap of accumulated earth, Ebers seems to think the site of the gardens, as well as of the palace. On the north side of this artificial hill, a lonely tamarisk still looks down on the river, a very old and thick bodied tree. The Arabs say it is the only tree that remains of the hanging gardens of Semiramis.

But the most amazing of all the wonders of Babylon was the great temple of Bel, described already in the first volume of these "Hours."[1] No religious structure, of ancient or modern times, has ever rivalled the grandeur of this primeval sanctuary, which rose like a mountain from the level of the country round. In its treasuries the spoils of the temple of Jerusalem, and much besides, had been laid up by Nebuchadnezzar, as an offering of gratitude to his chief god, for victory over his enemies. He little thought that he was unconsciously preserving the sacred vessels of Israel in a safe and inviolable stronghold, till the day when Jehovah would bring about their restoration to His people.

This mighty city Nebuchadnezzar boasted to have virtually created. It was the "great Babylon which he had built."[2] Nor was he without good grounds for the haughty vaunt. Proofs of its substantial truth still abound. The great new palace, he tells us,[3] was entirely built by him, and so also, ancient writers inform us, were the famous "hanging gardens;" and the bricks of the Kasr are all stamped with his name. He relates that he carefully repaired the old palace, and enlarged and thoroughly renewed the vast ancient reservoir of the city. Inscribed bricks confirm his own statement that he, in effect, rebuilt the great temple of Bel,[4] and he names eight other temples which he either built or restored. But his greatest work was the reconstruction

Duncker, *Gesch. des Alterthums*, vol. i. p. 572. Diodorus says that the gardens rose like the stages or steps of a theatre. Layard found a basrelief with a picture of a garden supported on pillars. *Nineveh and Babylon*, p. 223.

[1] See vol. i. pp. 274–279.

[2] Dan. iv. 30.

[3] *Records of the Past*, vol. v. pp. 130, 131.

[4] *Ibid.*, vol. v. p. 119.

of the gigantic walls of the city, which were in ruins when he ascended the throne. "Imgur-Bel and Nimiti-Bel, the great double wall of Babylon," says he, "I built. I completed buttresses, to embank its moat, and I made two long embankments of brick and cement along the sides of the river, joining them with the one made by my father. I strengthened the city, and built the wall on the west side of the river, with brick."[1] "I raised the walls of the fortress of Babylon, its defence in war, and skilfully strengthened the circuit of the city."

Nor was Nebuchadnezzar's amazing energy, as the restorer of Babylon, confined to the city. He excavated two broad and deep canals, one of them uniting the Tigris with the Euphrates, and threw a great bridge over the latter, to connect the two halves of the city. At Sippara he dug a huge reservoir, said to have been a hundred and forty-miles in circumference and a hundred and eighty feet deep, providing floodgates by which its waters might be drawn off at will for irrigation. A great canal, of which traces are still visible, was dug by him from Hit, on the Euphrates, to the Persian Gulf, a distance of 400 miles, and quays and breakwaters rose at its mouth, at his command, to receive the commerce of distant lands. A city was founded by him on the coast, to repel the Arabs. At Borsippa, besides building five other temples, he restored the temple of Nebo—identified by some with the Tower of Babel—and now the mightiest ruin in Mesopotamia. Bricks bearing his name are found over the whole country; at least a hundred sites in the district immediately round Babylon thus showing that they owed their chief glory to him. Indeed, nine-tenths of the bricks brought from Mesopotamia bear his name. The creator of the later empire of Babylon,

[1] *Records of the Past*, vol. v. p. 125.

he was also the author of its architectural splendour. He must be regarded as the greatest builder of ancient or modern times.[1]

In the magnificence of Babylon and its palaces Daniel and his companions passed their days—amidst lofty pyramid temples reflecting every colour from their ascending stages; houses, far and near, painted in bright tints at the pleasure of their owners, surrounded

A Grove of Palms.

by groves of gigantic palms and many other trees; the soft green of open parks, and the verdure of gardens. Outside the walls, countless silvery canals, shaded with trees, threaded the landscape amidst broad plains waving with corn, or teeming with the richness of varied crops.[2]

[1] Rawlinson's *Anc. Monarchies*, vol. iii. p. 489; Pusey's *Daniel*, p. 119.

[2] For a fine description of the Babylonian landscape, see Ebers, *Æg. Königstochter*, vol. ii. p. 2.

The pomp and splendour of such a city and such a monarchy must have amazed the Hebrew exiles. We know from the prophets the wealth of its commerce, which implies the luxury and magnificence of its merchant princes. Its "chariots like whirlwinds," its "horses swifter than eagles," its horsemen and charioteers, its infantry, with spear and helmet and shining armour, made its army the finest in the world. At Nebuchadnezzar's receptions Daniel must often have gazed with wonder on the state and glory of the crowd of satraps, captains, pachas, chief judges, treasurers, counsellors, and rulers of provinces,[1] in gorgeous uniforms and magnificent robes—worthy of the greatness of the State they served.

As became so mighty a capital, the science of the day found its headquarters in Babylon. Of this, magic and divination formed a prominent feature, and engrossed the studies of a special body of scholars. Hundreds of tablets yet remain, showing the exorcisms, charms, talismans, and astrological forms in vogue. Observatories crowned the summits of most of the pyramid temples, and reports from them, regularly sent to Court, were supposed to enable the initiated to predict the future, in nature, politics, and private life.[2] Various orders of these religio-scientific dignitaries are mentioned in the Book of Daniel—the *chartumim*, who were perhaps the sacred scribes, and seem to have been also interpreters of omens,[3] or "revealers of secret things;"[4] the *ashaphim*, or mutterers

[1] Dan. iii. 3, 27.

[2] *Records of the Past*, vol. i. pp. 153–157, 158–161.

[3] Ebers, *Æg. u. d. Bücher Mosis*, p. 341.

[4] Harkary, in *Journ. Asiat.*, 1870, p. 168. Chartumim (magicians), Dan. i. 20, seems to be a Hebrew word, from Cheret, a stylus, or ancient pen.

of magic spells;[1] the *mechsaphim*,[2] mutterers of other kinds of spells,—men, apparently professing to have power with evil spirits; the *Chasdim* or "Chaldeans,"[3] who were the astrologers or interpreters of the bearing of the stars on human affairs, Chaldea being the fatherland of the science;[4] the *Hakamim*,[5] or "magi," or "wise men," including, apparently, all the preceding classes, and the *gazerim*[6]—perhaps another name for the astrologers, since the word means the casting of horoscopes, and reading the supposed influence of the stars and planets on the fate of individuals and kingdoms. The "wisdom" of these classes was the boast of Babylonia. It was in such studies that Daniel, after his palace-education, on being brought before Nebuchadnezzar, himself an adept in all these matters, was found better skilled than any member of the various orders.[7]

Examples of the importance attached to dreams, in antiquity, have frequently come before us in earlier volumes,[8] and will naturally occur to every student of Scripture. That of Assurbanipal,[9] of Assyria, quoted in volume five,[10] from his inscriptions, shows the profound agitation into

[1] In Syriac it is applied to those who charm scorpions and serpents by whispering. It is a Heb. and also a Chald. word. It is rendered "astrologers," Dan. i. 20. The gate of the temple of Bel was called Bab Assaput,—"the gate of the oracle," and there was a chamber in the temple called Bit Assaput, "the house of the oracle." Lenormant, *La Divination*, pp. 133–4.

[2] Dan. ii. 2. "Sorcerers." [3] Dan. ii. 2.

[4] Gesenius, *Jes.*, vol. ii. p. 349. Egypt may perhaps dispute the honour.

[5] Dan. ii. 14. [6] Dan. ii. 27. "Soothsayers."

[7] Dan. i. 20. On the *religious ideas* of the Babylonians, see vol. i. pp. 304, 311. [8] Pp. 127–139.

[9] For the importance of dreams among the Egyptians, see vol. i. pp. 462–3; among the Ethiopians, vol. v. p. 81; among the Assyrians, vol. v. p. 86. [10] Vol. v. p. 86.

which even the most powerful minds were cast, in those ages, from such phenomena of sleep, so little regarded in our own day. It is therefore strictly in keeping with what might be expected, to read of similar alarm and anxiety having been caused to Nebuchadnezzar by such a visitation. In the second, or according to some readings, the twelfth year of his reign,[1] the sleep of the Great King, we are told, was troubled by a dream, all recollection of which had fled when he awoke. The whole staff of diviners, astrologers, and magi, were summoned forthwith to the palace, that by spells and conjurations, one class of them might force the evil spirits, who had snatched the vision from the king's brain, to give it back, while another should move the beneficent spirits of the sky to reveal it to them by magic arts, or by the signs of the stars and planets.[2] In every detail the narrative is true to the picture of Babylonian life disclosed by the clay literature of the times. The name of Arioch, the "captain of the king's guard,"[3] is the Babylonian Iri Aku, "the servant of the moon god.[4] His office of carrying out the sentences pronounced by the king, is in exact accordance with the duties of his position as captain of the royal body-guard,[5] and the punishment of being cut in pieces and having their houses levelled, which was the penalty of not recalling the dream, is thoroughly Babylonian. Sennacherib, indeed, had thus treated a whole city, on taking it, after the great

[1] Dan. ii. 1.

[2] In Dan. ii. 4, read "The Chaldeans answered the king, (Aramean)," that is—"here Aramean or Chaldee begins." They answer in their own language. Some copyist has inserted the word "Aramean," translated "Syriac" in A.V.

[3] Dan. ii. 14.

[4] Gen. xiv. 1. Schrader, *Keilinsch.*, 2te Aufg., p. 430.

[5] Jer. lii. 15; xxxix. 9, 11. 2 Kings xxv. 8.

rebellion.[1] In contrast to the Medes, whose king had to consult with his nobles, and was compelled to act in some cases against his will, in obedience to the law "which altered not,"[2] the kings of Babylon were absolute in the fullest sense of the word. No law restrained them. As in Turkey at the present day, their highest dignitaries were mere slaves, elevated at the will of their master, and dependent on his passing caprice. The chief eunuch, one of the highest officials, is rightly described in Daniel as fearing lest "his head might be endangered" by the smallest deviation from his master's will.[3] Every one in the State, whatever his rank, held his position and life only at the will of the monarch. "Whom the Great King would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive, and whom he would be set up, and whom he would he put down."[4] His rank was that of a son of the gods, before whom all men were as nothing. "Merodach" says Nebuchadnezzar, "created me in my mother's womb."[5] King Khammurabi claimed to be the son of Merodach and Ri,[6] and had his name inscribed, during his lifetime, along with that of the gods, the people swearing by his name as a divine being.[7] Nor was it different with other Babylonian or Assyrian kings.[8] Acquaintance so minute with the ideas prevalent in Babylon, as to the importance attached to dreams, their professed interpretation by the rules of astrology and magic, the different classes of "wise men," the high rank they held in the State, the punishments inflicted at the royal will, and even with the

[1] See vol. iv. p. 475. [2] Dan. vi. 14–17.

[3] Dan. i. 10. See, on a later page, the fear of Nehemiah before his Persian master.

[4] Dan. v. 19. [5] *Records of the Past*, vol. v. p. 113.

[6] *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 8. [7] *Ibid.*, vol. v. p. 109.

[8] *Speaker's Commentary* on Dan., vi. 7.

Babylonian proper names of the period, are silent witnesses to the truthfulness of the book in which they are found. Such petty details and exact local colouring imply a contemporary authorship.

The "great image" seen by Nebuchadnezzar in his dream[1] is no less strictly Babylonian. Colossal forms, human and bestial, met the eye on all sides in the capital, at the palace gates, in the courts of the temples, and elsewhere, and might easily be woven into the texture of a dream. Statues were brought, as a special object of plunder, from conquered cities, and set up in the metropolis of the victor. Thus, Assurbanipal records that in one campaign he brought away thirty-two statues of kings, in silver, gold, bronze, and alabaster, and others of the gods.[2] The gold, silver, bronze, and iron of Nebuchadnezzar's image were thus familiar for such uses, and the excavations attest that statues in baked clay abounded.

That a forgotten dream should have been recalled by Daniel, and interpreted with such evident wisdom, filled the mind of the Great King with awe. He felt that the Jewish captive was the mouth-piece of a Power greater than his own, and therefore more than human. Himself skilled in the superstitious arts of his day,[3] he saw that they had utterly failed, where Daniel stood triumphant. Such a result implied the direct aid of a God mightier than those invoked by the Babylonians, and the Divine honours supremely due to a Being so transcendent demanded that the highest respect should be shown to His representative. The scene at the gate of Lystra, where the crowd, under similar excitement, wished to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas, was anticipated in

[1] Dan. ii. 31. [2] Smith's *Assurbanipal*, pp. 227–230.
[3] Dan. i. 20.

the gorgeous halls of the Great King. Falling down on his face, Nebuchadnezzar paid Daniel the lowly reverence due to a messenger of the Highest God, while the priests, at his order, poured out a drink-offering at his feet, and burned incense before him.[1] To raise him to lofty dignity followed. Such a man was clearly the most illustrious of the sacred orders of Babylon; he should henceforth bear rank as such, and take precedence in the metropolitan province, which included Babylon and the district round. But Daniel, always generous and faithful, shrank from such an exaltation, until he had secured that of his three companions also, to posts of dignity; the special honour, however, being granted to him alone, of apartments in the royal palace.[2] Four, at least, of the Hebrew captives were thus advanced within the charmed circle[3] where they could most efficiently serve the interests of their race.

The incident of the golden image set up by the Great King[4] is illustrated in many of its details by the inscriptions, or from hints of ancient authors.

Colossal statues of gold were familiar to the Babylonians. The description given, by Diodorus of Sicily, of the three which, till it was plundered by Xerxes, crowned the great Temple of Bel, displaying to all, far and near, the figures of the three great gods of the city, shows that, with the altars and other accessories before them, they contained

[1] Dan. ii. 46.

[2] Dan. ii. 49. The words "sat in the gate of the king," are equivalent to having quarters in the palace, as the gate stands for the whole building. Esther ii. 19, 21; iii. 2, etc.

[3] The word used is, that he made them *shallits*, an official title used in the inscriptions. It is the diminutive of *Sultan*, which is derived from the same verb. It occurs in Dan. ii. 15; v. 29. Ezra iv. 20.

[4] Dan. iii.

a mass of the precious metal, equal in value to £17,225,000 of our money.[1] Moreover, in the temple at Borsippa, till the time of Xerxes, there was, according to Herodotus,[2] who visited Babylon soon after, a statue of solid gold 18 feet high. There is, further, in the British Museum, a tablet containing a charge laid before the king, against two high officials, of having made away with seven talents of pure gold,[3] destined to form a statue of himself and his mother.[4] The very robes of gold presented, apparently by Assurbanipal, to the great idols, Merodach and Zirpanit, in the pyramid temple of Babylon, weighed, as we learn from an inscription, four talents, which was equal to £14,500, and were, besides, enriched with precious stones.[5] The amount of gold carried off by Nebuchadnezzar as the spoil of all Western Asia, exceeds imagination, if it were not confirmed by trustworthy documents. One of his inscriptions informs us that he plated an altar placed before the Temple of Bel, with pure gold, of immense weight, and lined all the interior of the sanctuary, at the top of the highest stage or terrace of the temple, "with beaten gold, shining like the rising and setting sun."[6] A statue of one of the Assyrian kings,[7] and others of Nebo and Istar, were found at Nimroud,[8] so that Nebuchadnezzar's golden image was strictly in keeping with the fashion of the time, while the gigantic size affected in this case, harmonized with his other creations at Babylon.

[1] *Diod. Sic.*, ii. 9. [2] *Herod.*, i. 181.

[3] The value of this weight of gold would be over £25,000.

[4] Lenormant, *Choix de Textes*, fasc. 4.

[5] *West. Asiat. Ins.*, ii. 38, 3. [6] *Ibid.*, i. 53. 58.

[7] Now in the British Museum. See Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*, vol. ii. p. 51.

[8] Rawlinson's *Anct. Mon.*, vol. i. pp. 141, 341.

Such sacred images were inaugurated with extraordinary solemnities, the statue being borne along with all reverence, in a procession of the notables and sacred orders, amidst the loud celebrations and rejoicings[1] of a great public festival. Shalmaneser, who was contemporary, as king of Assyria, with Ahab and Jehu, and also Samai-Rimmon his son, had erected statues of their "magnified royalty, at Nineveh,[2] and, as a still mightier sultan, Nebuchadnezzar might well go beyond them. He therefore ordered a huge image, perhaps of himself, perhaps of his chief god, Merodach,[3] overlaid entirely with plates of gold,[4] to be erected in the Plain of Dura, a spot near Babylon, still retaining the same name. It lies about five miles from the great city,[5] on the south-east, in a district marked by the dry channels of various ancient canals, once spreading fertility on every side. One bears the name of Nahr Dura—"the stream of the walls"—perhaps from its connection with the great moats round the fortifications. It leads to a series of mounds extending for the distance of a league. These, as a whole, are called the Mounds of Dura; the ancient watercourses ending at their feet. One of them, now named Mokhattat—"the squared mound,"—faces the four cardinal points, and rises to the height of nearly twenty feet; each side, at the base, being almost exactly fifty-six feet long. On the top of this, Oppert found four blocks of bricks,

[1] *Records of the Past*, vol. v. p. 117.

[2] *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 17. Norris, *Ass. Dict.*, vol. ii. p. 345. Oppert, *Gram. Assyr.*, p. 120.

[3] Lenormant, *Divination*, p. 183.

[4] The great image of Bel is said, in "Bel and the Dragon," to have been of clay within and brass outside. Bel, etc. ver. 7.

[5] Oppert places it outside the city. The *Speaker's Com.* supposes it was within the city. But the houses would hide a wide view of it there. Besides, Oppert was on the spot.

formerly a united whole. "On seeing this mound," says he, "one is instantly struck with its resemblance to the pedestal of a colossal statue, and everything leads to the conclusion that it is the base of that of which the Book of Daniel speaks." [1]

The monument as a whole, including, we may suppose, the platform from which it rose, towered to a height of ninety feet,[2] with a breadth, in some parts, of nine, which would seem to indicate that the image was seated rather than erect, like some of the colossal forms which Nebuchadnezzar had seen in Egypt. Such a figure would be visible at a great distance, for the dip of the horizon in the level plain of Dura is only fifty-three feet in twelve miles.[3]

The inauguration ceremonies of this huge idol were on a scale magnificent even for Babylon. Runners posted to distant regions, commanding the attendance of the satraps and their deputies, the shallits or petty sultans, the generals,[4] the treasurers, the judges, the lawyers, and all the governors of the provinces. Ere long, the roads throughout the empire, leading to the capital, were thronged by brilliant cavalcades converging on the great centre, and in due time an assembly of surpassing splendour appeared at Dura, to honour the high festival. Religion in antiquity was strictly a matter of state; disloyalty to the gods appointed for public worship being held covert disloyalty to the monarch who commanded homage to be paid them. Hence it was proclaimed that

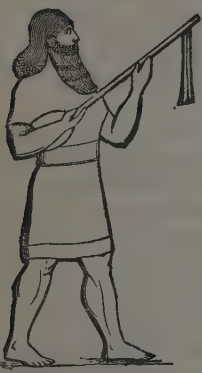
[1] *Expédition en Mésop.*, vol. i. pp, 239, 340. *Journ. of R. Geog. Soc.*, vol. x. p. 93.

[2] Taking the cubit at eighteen inches.

[3] Selby's *Trigon. Survey of Mesopotamia*, India Office.

[4] Rendered by some, "magistrates"; by Ewald, "arch-astrologers"; by Mühlau und Volck, "chief judges."

all should prostrate themselves when the outburst of triumphal music announced the proper moment; refusal to do so being threatened with the terrible punishment of being burnt to death in a fiery furnace. This was the fate reserved for audacious rebels, such as Saulmugina,[1] or blasphemers, like Dimaun, who had cursed the gods under the reign of Assurbanipal. A picture on the palace walls of that monarch, at Kouyundjik, indeed, shows two unfortunate creatures being burnt alive, their tongues having first been pulled out.[2] The narrative of Daniel's companions having been thrown into the burning furnace for refusal to worship the golden image, is thus in strict accordance with Babylonian usages.



A Player on the Egyptian Guitar, Assyria.

That the names of some of the instruments used at the inauguration of the golden idol—the sambūkē, the kitharis and the psalterion[3]—are Greek, has been regarded as showing "Daniel" to be of late origin. But while music occupies a small space in the sculptures of the earlier kings, it became a prominent feature in all religious and public ceremonies in Assyria and Babylon, in the beginning of the sixth century before Christ, that is, just before the time of Nebuchadnezzar; and nothing was more natural, when we remember the wide dispersion of the Greeks

[1] See vol. v. pp. 87–89. [2] *West. Asiat. Inscr.*, iii. 37, 7.

[3] The sambūkē was a large harp, similar to our own; the kitharis, a lyre, like ours; the psalterion, another variety of the lyre.

even at an earlier period, than that foreign instruments should have been familiar on the Euphrates, at this time. Greek regiments had been common in Egypt for generations. Sargon, so long before as the days of Isaiah, knew the Ionians, or Greeks. Sennacherib had invaded Cilicia. Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal came in contact with the race in Phenicia, and both kings had Greek chiefs of Cyprus as their tributaries. Foreign instruments, moreover, would be as eagerly sought after then as now; and if we meet Sanscrit words for Indian productions[1] in the Book of Kings, why not Grecian names in Daniel, for importations from the West?

Indeed, the musicians on the late Assyrian sculptures use a variety of instruments[2] of which many were undoubtedly foreign, like the *kinnor* of Syria, the double flute of Asia Minor,[3] and the seven-stringed cithara, which is certainly a Greek invention.[4] Nor can we forget how captives were forced by their masters to sing and play their native music, as the Psalms so pathetically record in the case of the Jews.[5]

In the narrative of the deliverance of the three Hebrew confessors from the fiery furnace, Nebuchadnezzar is represented as saying that he saw a fourth presence, like that of the "Son of God,"[6] but as the article is wanting in the sacred text it is more correct to read "a son of the gods." Regarding himself as of Divine descent, he may have used the phrase only in allusion to a royal dignity in the Form, like his own. But another meaning is not improbable, for the word Bar, employed by the Great King, though equivalent to "Son," was also

[1] See vol. iii. p. 387.
[2] See vol. iv. p. 105.
[3] *Five Great Monarchies*, 2nd ed., vol. i. pp. 529, 530, 534.
[4] Lenormant, *La Divination*, p. 191.
[5] Ps. cxxxvii.
[6] Dan. iii. 25.

the special name of the God of Fire. It may be, therefore, that he fancied he recognised, in the angel, a form like "Bar, of the gods," and thought the fire-god himself had appeared on behalf of the sufferers, as a protest against their treatment.

The mental alienation of Nebuchadnezzar[1] was undoubtedly the form of madness known as lycanthropy,[2] in which the habits of animals are in some form assumed by the insane person. Instances of those afflicted in this way eating grass, leaves, twigs, etc., like the Great King, are familiar to medical men. Nor is it uncommon for the mind to lose its balance in some direction, in one raised so far above all other men as a mighty despot, and so irresponsible. Many of the Cæsars undoubtedly suffered this terrible penalty of solitary greatness, nor are theirs the only instances of the kind in history. That any allusion to such a humiliating calamity should be found recorded in the Babylonian annals, is not however to be expected. It would be carefully guarded from the knowledge of chroniclers, as a palace secret. But that some terrible illness seized Nebuchadnezzar is strangely proved by the recent discovery of a bronze doorstep, presented by him to the great temple of El Saggil, at Borsippa, one of the suburbs or divisions of Babylon. It speaks of his having been afflicted, and of his restoration to health, and may well have been a votive offering to the gods on his recovery from the attack mentioned in Daniel. Nor is this at all inconsistent with his recorded homage to Jehovah.[3] Though he honoured the whole of the gods, his inscriptions show that in a restricted sense he always worshipped one

[1] Dan. iv. *Daniel* p. 425.

[2] Dr. Pusey has collected many instances of this; Lycanthrophy = lit. "the change of a man into a wolf."

[3] Dan. iv. 34, 37.

god especially. While he built temples to various divinities, and acknowledged not only the "great gods," but at least thirteen besides, he also speaks constantly of the "chief of the gods," the "King of the Gods," and "the God of gods." Merodach is "the Great Lord," "God his maker," the "Lord of all beings," "the Prince of Heaven," "the God of Heaven and Earth," "the Lord of Lords," "the Lord God."[1] He might, therefore, have for the time transferred to Jehovah, perhaps as another name for his own Merodach, the homage hitherto rendered to the Babylonian idol.

With the fourth chapter of Daniel, the Scripture record of Nebuchadnezzar's life closes. He survived his temporary alienation for some years, and died in B.C. 561, the undisputed ruler of his vast empire. Unfortunately, very few cuneiform memorials of his reign have survived; nor are there any annals of his campaigns, like those left by some Assyrian kings. His inscriptions refer mainly to the construction of temples, palaces, and public buildings; but they incidentally throw light on his zeal for the gods, and his pride in being virtually the builder of his mighty capital.

The record of his repairing the Temple of the Seven Lights at Borsippa has already been given,[2] in illustration of the story of the Tower of Babel. Besides this, we have a lengthened statement of his building or restoring various temples, at an immense cost, and of his raising the walls, digging the moats, and otherwise strengthening the defences of Babylon, and a very short notice of his expeditions to Egypt.[3] Fortunately, however, there have come to light a series of commercial tablets, the business records of a great banking house in Babylon, beginning

[1] See *Records of the Past*, vol. v. pp. 111, ff.; vol. vii. pp. 69 ff.
[2] Vol. i. p. 277. [3] See p. 206.

with the first year of his reign, and continuing for the next 117 years, to the thirty-fifth year of King Darius Hystaspis, B.C. 485. Egibi, the founder of the house, seems to have lived in the later years of the reign of Sennacherib; but though this is implied by a single tablet of B.C. 677, the unbroken series begins only in B.C. 604. They are of the greatest value in fixing dates; but, besides this, they incidentally throw light on not a few points of Babylonian life. One records a loan of a few shekels to some needy borrower; another the sale or mortgage of great estates. Every legal precaution is taken in the various documents to prevent fraud and secure the exact fulfilment of covenants, under every contingency. Witnesses duly attest each transaction, and each tablet is duly docketed and labelled, after being registered in the government office at Babylon. While the Hebrews were listening to Ezekiel at Chebar, and Daniel was at his duties or studies in the palace, the clerks and principals of the great banking-house were quietly working at their desks in the city, discounting bills, advancing loans, and negotiating sales and mortgages, as if the business premises of Egibi were the only important spot in the universe!

There is a strange tradition respecting the end of Nebuchadnezzar's reign.[1] It relates that after he had grown mightier than Hercules, and had undertaken campaigns to Lybia and Iberia, and settled part of the subdued nations at Pontus, on the Black Sea, the Great King went up to the roof of his palace, and prophesied, by the inspiration of a god, that the Medes and Persians would, hereafter, bring the Babylonians to slavery, not without guilt on the part of the ruler of the empire.

[1] From Abydenus in Eusebius, *Præp. Evan.*, ix. 41, b. Ed. Gaisford.

Having utttered these things, Nebuchadnezzar, we are told, suddenly vanished.[1]

[1] Two inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar have been lately found cut in the rocks of Phenicia—one of them announced only this year, 1884. The earlier known of these inscriptions is engraved in the rocks of the Dog River; the other on those of one of the wildest valleys of the Lebanon. The commencement of this inscription—indeed there are two, at the same place, with the same beginning—reads thus, "Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, the Illustrious Shepherd (King), the servant of Merodach the Great Lord, his creator, and of Nebo, his (Merodach's) illustrious son, whom his royalty (Nebuchadnezzar) loves." Unluckily, they only give an account of the great buildings he is having constructed in Babylon. The earlier inscription, on the Dog River, is equally unimportant, merely speaking, as already said, of the various wines of Lebanon, of which the Great King tell us that of Helbon, near Damascus was, in his opinion, the best.

# CHAPTER XIV.

## COMFORT YE MY PEOPLE.


| | B.C. | | B.C. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Evil-Merodach . . . . | 561–559 | Pisistratus in Athens . . . | 560 |
| Nergal-Sharezer . . . | 559–555 | Cyrus conquers Media. . . | 558 |
| Laborosoarchod . . . | 555 | Crœsus reigns in Lydia . . | 558 |
| Nabonidus. . . . . | 555–538 | Crœsus overthrown by Cyrus . . . . . | 545 |
| Cyrus occupies Babylon | 538 | | |


THE year B.C. 561 was marked by the death of Nebuchadnezzar, at the age of about eighty, after a reign of more than forty-three years. He had created the mighty empire over which he ruled, and it may be said to have died with him; for in less than a quarter of a century the city of Babylon itself yielded to Cyrus without a blow. His son, Evil-Merodach ("Merodach's Man"), succeeded him; but is known as king only through his kindness to Jehoiachin, who had languished in Nebuchadnezzar's dungeons for thirty-seven years. Releasing him after his long durance, he "spoke kindly to him," we are told, and gave him maintenance from the royal table for the rest of his life. Zedekiah was doubtless already dead, else he would, we may suppose, have shared in this good fortune. But the benefactor of the poor Jewish king did not live long to enjoy his high position. Three years after his accession he was murdered

by Nergal Sharezer, who seems to have been the "prince" of that name holding a command in the army of Nebuchadnezzar at the taking of Jerusalem.[1] Like that dignitary, he is styled in the inscriptions "Rubu Emga," or Rab Mag—a title the meaning of which is not known—and it is not probable that two persons of the same name could have held the dignity it represents, under the same king. He had married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, and thus had every opportunity for treason. But he did not live long to enjoy the fruits of his crime, dying a natural death within less than four years and a half after his accession. A palace built by him has been discovered at Babylon; the only one on the right bank of the Euphrates; his name and titles appearing on the bricks which still remain. His son, who succeeded him, was a mere boy, and was murdered after a brief reign of four months. The throne was then seized by Nabunahid, or Nabonidus, who claimed to be the son of the Rubu Emga, the title given to Nergal Sharezer. He was the last king of Babylon, retaining the sovereignty till overthrown, after seventeen years, by Cyrus. Of his reign the inscriptions furnish us with some notices, which will be given in their place.

The religious life of the Jewish exiles in these years was slowly reawaking, under the influence of their national misfortunes and of the words of the prophets. It is impossible to assign precise dates to many of the Psalms, but some appear to refer so distinctly to the Captivity that we may fitly ascribe them to that period.

The 14th seems to belong to this class.

[1] Jer. xxxix. 3. Authorities for the chronology: Ruetschi in *Herzog*, 2te Auf., art. Nebuchadnezzar; Sayce, *Fresh Light, etc.*; Riehm, *Calwer Bibellexicon*, etc.

The fool[1] says in his heart, "there is no God."
They have corrupted themselves, they have done abominable deeds,
There is no one that does what is right.
Jehovah looked down from heaven on the sons of men,
To see if there were any that had understanding:
Any who sought after God!
All have turned aside; all alike are corrupted:[2]
No one does good, no, not one!
"Are all these workers of iniquity without knowledge,
Who eat up My people as they eat bread,
And do not worship Jehovah?"
They trembled in great fear (where no fear was)[3]
For God is in the generation of the righteous;
Ye may pour contempt (ye who believe not in God) on the oppressed,
Because he makes Jehovah his refuge! (It matters not!)
Oh that the Salvation of Israel would come out of Zion!
When Jehovah turns back the captivity of His people
Jacob shall rejoice and Israel shall be glad!

In the 105th and 106th Psalms the great deeds performed by God in ancient times on behalf of His people seem to be recapitulated, to rouse the exiles to confidence that He would, after all, deliver the nation from their present calamities. Both poems show a minute acquaintance with the early history of the race, as preserved in the Pentateuch, which must thus have been universally known, and accepted as a sacred record, when they were written. The national idolatry of the past is sternly denounced, and a spirit like that of Phinehas shown against any approach to it. Israel, it tells us, had sinned in not destroying the heathen nations of

[1] Ps. xiv. [2] Tainted, or sour.

[3] From the duplicate version of the psalm (liii. 5.) The Hebrews were in terror of their heathen oppressors, but without cause, "for," etc.; see next line.

Canaan utterly.[1] Failing to do this, its sons had mingled among them and imitated their idolatry. They had sacrificed to the Shedim, the gods represented in Babylonia, where they now lived, by the colossal bulls and monsters around them.[2] The blood of their sons and daughters had been offered to the idols of Canaan, till God, in His wrath, had given them into the hand of the heathen, and they that hated them ruled over them. But even in their exile He had remembered them, for His covenant's sake, and "made them to be pitied of all those that carried them captive."

"Save us, O Jehovah, our God!" concludes the Psalmist, "and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto Thy holy name, and to glory in Thy praise."

Then follows the grand doxology:

"Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting!
And let all the people say Amen!
Hallelujah!"

But it is in the 137th Psalm that we meet with the most pathetic memorial of these gloomy days, written after the return of the exiles to their own land; a memorial touching in its sympathy for Israel in its sufferings, but marked by that fierce spirit towards the enemies of the nation which shows the contrast between Judaism and Christianity.

By the streams[3] of Babylon, there sat we, and wept,
When we thought upon Zion!

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[1] Ps. cvi. 34. Deut. vii. 2. Num. xxxiii. 52. See further, in any Reference Bible.

[2] Schrader's *Keilinschrift.*, p. 160. Ps. cvi. 37.

[3] The canals of irrigation. Ps. cxxxvii.

We hanged our harps on the willows [1] in the land; [2]
For there our oppressors demanded from us the music of our songs,
Our slave-drivers required us to make mirth for them.
(Ordering us to) "Sing (to them) the songs of Zion"!

How could we sing the songs of Jehovah in a strange land?

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget (its cunning);
Let my tongue cleave to my palate
If I do not remember thee;
If I set not Jerusalem above my chiefest joy!

Remember, O Jehovah, to the sons of Edom, the day (of the fall) of Jerusalem; [3]
How they cried, "Rase it, rase it to its foundations!"

O daughter of Babylon, thou oppressor,
Joy to him who repays thee what thou hast done to us!
Joy to him who takes thy children and dashes them against the stones!

The visions of Daniel are another reminiscence of the days of the Exile, and mark an era in the literature of the nation. As if the altered circumstances of the times had influenced the form of revelation, the seer no longer conveys the messages of God to His people by ordinary

[1] The weeping willow, to which, from this passage, Linnæus gave the name *Salix Babylonica*, is not found in Babylonia. "The weeping willow is indigenous in China and Japan, cultivated in Europe, but neither indigenous nor cultivated in Babylonia."—Koch's *Dendrologie*, vol. ii. p. 507. It may be either the tamarisk or the poplar, to which the Arabs still give the name of *Ereb*, the word used in this Psalm. *Stanley's Lectures*, vol. iii. p. 11. Wetstein, in Delitzsch's *Jes.*, 2te Auf., p. 460, is of this opinion also. Dr. Tristram, however, thinks the willow is intended. *N. H. B.*, p. 414.

[2] *Ewald.*

[3] Obad. xi. 12. Jer. xlix. 7–22. Lam. iv. 21, 22. Ezek. xxv. 8–14. Zech. i. 15.

discourse, but by a series of visions in which angels take the place of "the word of Jehovah." He is no more a preacher to his contemporaries, but discloses to them the future history of the kingdom of God in its widest relations. Ezekiel had already introduced this apocalyptic feature, but Daniel confines himself to it; and it is a curious question how far the mind of both may have been influenced in the mystical style of their visions by earlier writings, more or less similar in character. Zoroaster, the great reformer of the ancient Persian religion, had ended his course before that of the Jewish prophet began, and his writings and sayings may readily have spread from Persia to the neighbouring Babylon. Local influences, as we have seen, affected the inspired writers as they do others, and it is, thus, noteworthy to find in Zoroaster such a passage as the following:—

Zertuscht[1] having asked Ormuzd for immortality, was shown by him the Omniscient Wisdom. He saw a tree with such a root that four trees had sprung from it,—a golden, a silver, a steel, and an iron one. Then said Zertuscht: "Lord, thou ruler of the dignities of earth and heaven, I have seen the root of a tree from which four trees have sprung." And Ormuzd replied to the holy Zertuscht: "The root of this one tree thou hast seen is the world; and the four trees that have sprung from it are the four times that are to come;—the golden, when I and thou are at one, and Kstaçp-shah receives the law, and the body of the Devs is broken in pieces and they hide themselves; the silver is the reign of the royal Artaschir; the steel, the reign of Anosherevan-Khosru, son of Kobat; the iron, the evil rule of the Devs."[2]

[1] The modern name for Zoroaster.

[2] MS. of Prof. Spiegel. From the *Bahman Jescht*. *Herzog*, 2te Auf., vol. iii. p. 472.

The similarity between this and the visions of Daniel is apparent; and it can be no irreverence to trace the influence of such a form of composition on that of the sacred writer. Designing to keep before the mind of succeeding generations the development of the kingdom of the Messiah, he adopts a style already familiar to his brethren in their new home, and so suited to the popular taste that his Book became the first of a long series of writings of a similar type. The Book of Esdras, the Book of Enoch, the Jewish Sybillines, and other books of the same class, followed the model thus set by Daniel, and formed the last, though uninspired, link between ancient prophecy and the fulness of revelation under Jesus Christ.[1]

But it was not to the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel only, or to the apocalyptic visions of Daniel, or the writings of the minor prophets of past generations, that Israel owed the amazing religious revival which marked the later years of the Captivity, and permanently revolutionized the national character.

The high position and personal dignity of Daniel must have spread his name very early amongst the exiles, for we find him, in B.C. 592, fourteen years after his deportation from Jerusalem, classed by Ezekiel with Noah and Job, for his righteousness, and five years later spoken of by the same prophet, as the wisest of the wise, in all that concerns the secrets of the future.[2] But though his high position and great name might be a boast and even a protection to his race, his visions of the coming changes of kingdoms bore only indirectly on personal religion.

[1] Menant remarks that the vision of Nebuchadnezzar, of the image of gold, silver, brass, iron, and clay, reads, line by line, like the paraphrase of some cuneiform inscription.

[2] Ezek. xiv. 12; xxviii. 3.

Much of Ezekiel's teaching was equally general, needing the lapse of time to reveal all its significance; while many of his discourses referred to events of the day, like the fall of Jerusalem. The whole spirit of his long ministry, however, urged the necessity for national reformation, as a preliminary to the obtaining a return to Canaan. Jeremiah, also, had for many years preached the need of hearty repentance and loyalty to Jehovah, and the power of his words increased with the couse of years. But, besides these, the portion of Isaiah extending from the fortieth chapter to the end of the book, rich as it is, beyond any other portion of the Old Testament, in its evangelical tone, must have given a mighty impulse to the movement towards a higher spiritual life. It has been the subject of much controversy whether these chapters were uttered by Isaiah himself, or are the composition of an unknown prophet. The actual authorship, however, is by no means a vital question, if, as is rightfully claimed, the inspiration of the writer be admitted.[1] Many books of Scripture, though anonymous, are not the less sacred and canonical, and the second part of Isaiah would not suffer in either respect, even if another prophet had written the first section. However scholars may find matter of dispute on grounds beyond popular appreciation, the chief arguments advanced for a different authorship of the two portions are of no weight to those who recognise a supernatural element in Scripture. That Isaiah lived more than a hundred years before the Exile can be no difficulty, if we believe that the prophets were not only preachers to their own generation, but men inspired to predict things to come, for the glory of God and the good of the Church. Even in the first part of the book, moreover, though Babylon had

[1] Delitzsch, *Jes.*, vol. ii. p. 138.

not yet risen to power, it is expressly named[1] as the future oppressor of Israel, and why should it not be in the second? The Exile is foretold once and again[2] in the first part, why should it not be dwelt upon in the other? Micah, the contemporary of Isaiah, had announced, in words which are universally accepted by critics as genuine, that his countrymen should be carried off to Babylon.[3] In naming Cyrus generations before his birth, Isaiah only supplied a fitting test of the trustworthiness of the promises he was commissioned to make to the Church, and of the supreme majesty of Jehovah as the revealer of things to come. The writer of the second part speaks, indeed, as if in the midst of the exiles; but this is of so little weight that Ewald assumes him to have lived in Egypt, as one of the fugitives who fled thither with Jeremiah after the murder of Gedaliah.[4]

Nor are the arguments based on philological grounds more conclusive. The vocabulary of the second half shows striking resemblances to that of the first and of the earlier prophets, and reveals equally marked differences from that of the later. While 848 words of the second part are found in the first, only 735 of these occur in the exile-prophet Ezekiel, though his prophecy is about twice as long. There are eight words found in both parts of Isaiah and nowhere else, but there is only one that is peculiar to the second part and the period of the Exile. A close comparison of the allusions in both sections, to the vegetable, animal, and human kingdoms, shows that, the ideas and local colouring are closely alike throughout,

[1] Isa. xxxix. 6 ff.

[2] Isa. i. 27; v. 5 ff.; xiii. 26 ff.; vi. 11, 12; x. 5 ff.; xii. 20; xi. 11; xxx. 12.

[3] Mic. iv. 10.

[4] Seinecke thinks he lived in Jerusalem; Duhm, that he did not live in Babylon. *Theol. d. Proph.*, 1875, p. 283.

and that in both parts they do not correspond with the scenery of Babylon or the environments of one living there.[1] The force of the argument resting on the rare words common to both divisions may be illustrated by an example. There are two Hebrew nouns, *hor* and *hur*, from the root "to be white," meaning *white linen*. The same words are also formed from an entirely different root, "to hollow out" and mean, in this case, *a hole*. The first part of Isaiah uses *hor* for white linen, and *hur* for hole, but the later writers reverse this. The second part uses only *hur*, but employs it in the sense of *hole*, thus differing from later writers, and agreeing with the first part. Indeed this is one of the eight words occurring only in the two parts of Isaiah. In the same way, the word *purah*, "a winepress," occurs only once in the second part, and once in Haggai, a prophet of the period after the Exile. But as the word comes from the verb *to bruise*, it must originally have meant the upper part of the wine-press, and it is used in this sense in Isaiah, while Haggai uses it, as was natural in a late writer, for the lower part of the winepress, into which the juice flows.

Such arguments may seem minute, but they are so much the more forcible, and, in my opinion, irresistible, in the aggregate. Wholly undesigned coincidences and the silent testimony of language may well be set against theoretical objections, or fancied diversities of style; for no ancient book is safe if critics are to be *à priori* judges. But when, as in this case, the very language of the book itself bears witness, there is no room for hesitation; it seems to indicate clearly that the whole sixty-six chapters

[1] See *Bib. Sacra*, 1881 and 1882, in which the whole subject is treated in the most masterly way by the Rev. W. H. Cobb, Uxbridge, Mass.

are rightly ascribed to a single age and a single author.[1]

In the first half of his prophecies, Isaiah had addressed the people of his own day; in the second he transports himself into the midst of the exiled community, to comfort them in their sorrows, and lead them to sincere repentance. The despair which meets us in some chapters of Ezekiel,[2] had settled on them like a thick cloud, and still darkened the heavens.[3] Israel seemed forsaken by Jehovah, its ways appeared to be hidden from Him, and judgment against its oppressors to have been forgotten. But the prophet knows how deeply this feeling wrongs both themselves and Jehovah. After contrasting Jehovah[4] with the idols, and Israel with the heathen, he describes, almost like a fifth Evangelist, the redemption to be brought by the "Servant of Jehovah" and His subsequent exaltation.[5] The true Israel and the false are then contrasted, the sins of the unworthy denounced, and the souls of the faithful cheered by a vision of future Messianic glory. The truly righteous alone are comforted. It is twice repeated, that "there is no peace from Jehovah to the wicked,"[6] whose awful fate, if they remain impenitent, is proclaimed in the final words—"their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched."

This great inspired lyric opens by a command from

[1] On the two sides of this question, see Reuss, *Gesch. d. A. Test.*, pp. 426, ff. Stähelin, in *Studien u. Krit.*, 1830, vol. i.; 1831, vol. iii. Meier, in ditto, 1845, vol. iv. Ruetzchi, in ditto, 1854, vol. ii. Keil's *Einleitung*, p. 236. Naegelsbach's *Jesaia, Einleitung*. Delitzsch's *Jesaia*, pp. 383 ff., etc., etc.

[2] Ezek. xxxiii. 10; xxxvii. 11.

[3] Isa. xl. 27; xlix. 14.

[4] Isa. xl. 48.

[5] Isa. xlix.–lvii.

[6] Isa. xlviii. 22; lvii. 21.

Jehovah to the prophets [1] of the day, to comfort His people in their despondency. Deliverance, often promised, was still delayed. Jehovah had apparently forsaken them, and this wellnigh cast them into despair. To cheer away their sadness, they are reminded of the unchanging love borne towards them by God.

1 Comfort ye [2] (O ye prophets), comfort ye My people, saith your God. 2 Speak ye to the (mourning) heart of Jerusalem, and cry aloud to her (that) the time of her affliction [3] is completed,[4] that (the penalty of) her guilt is paid off,[5] that she has received of the hand of Jehovah full punishment [6] for all her sins.

While the prophet, awestruck, listens to this voice from above, a second is heard announcing that preparations for the deliverance of Israel are already begun. Jehovah, Himself, will go at their head and lead them forth from captivity; a highway being first made ready across the desert, as before great princes,[7] alike to do Him honour and to aid the march of the ransomed host.

3 Hark! one is calling! "Prepare ye in the wilderness a way for Jehovah;[8] level ye a road through the desert for our

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[1] There were many prophets. Isa. lii. 8. Jer. xxix. 1.

[2] Isa. xl. 1, 2.

[3] Lit., "service of war," including all the misery, hardness, and suffering of a soldier's life in the field (Job vii. 1, 10; xvii. 14). The Sept. has caught the meaning well, rendering the word "humiliation."

[4] The figure is from a soldier's time of service being ended. Hosea had called Israel in God's name, "Lo-ammi," "not My people"; they now are once more "My people" (Hos. i. 9).

[5] Jer. l. 20. Lit., "satisfied."

[6] Lit., "double." Jer. xvii. 18. See vol. v. p. 305. Gesenius, Ewald, and some others, understand "double compensation," but this is not so suitable.

[7] Arrian, *Exped. Alex.*, iv. 30. *Diod. Sic.*, ii. 13.

[8] It will be remembered that these verses are understood by all

God![1] 4 Let every hollow[2] be filled up, and every mountain and hill made level, and the stony places made smooth as the *Mishor*,[3] and the rough hillocks a plain. Then shall the glory of Jehovah reveal itself, and all flesh shall see it;[4] for the mouth of Jehovah has thus spoken!

The mention of the glory of Jehovah suggests the contrast between it and that of man, even when represented by the ruler of a mighty empire like Babylon. He hears the voice that has already spoken, commanding him to cry aloud.

6 Hark! a voice saying, "Cry!" And (the prophet) said, "What shall I cry?" (Say) All flesh is grass and all its glory like the flower of the field. 7 The grass dries up and the flower fades, when the wind of Jehovah blows over it. Verily mankind are but grass! 8 The grass dries up, the flower fades, but the word of our God shall stand for ever.[5]

The prophet next passes in imagination to Palestine, and calls on Jerusalem to announce to the cities of Judah that their God is coming, at the head of the exiles.

9 Get thee up to the high mountain, O Zion, thou announcer of glad tidings: lift up thy voice mightily, O Jerusalem, thou

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the Evangelists to refer to John the Baptist, so that we have their inspired authority for applying the verses that follow, not only to the Return, but, in a far grander sense, to the Advent of Salvation by the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the King Messiah of the spiritual and immortal kingdom of God.

[1] When the Sultan was about to visit Broussa, in Asia Minor, in 1845, a proclamation was issued, ordering the stones along the route to be gathered out, hollows filled up, and rough places smoothed. It was the same when Ibrahim Pasha visited the Lebanon districts. *Land and Book*, p. 77. It is to be remembered that there are no roads in the East, in our sense of the term.

[2] Heb. "gai." [3] See vol. ii. p. 374.

[4] Ewald has, "His salvation."

[5] The Divine promise of the deliverance of Israel from Babylon.

proclaimer of good news! Lift it up! Be not afraid! Cry to the towns of Judah, "Behold your God!" 10 Behold, the Lord Jehovah will come as a Mighty One: His (strong) arm will uphold His rule; behold, His reward is with Him and His recompense before Him.[1]

Israel was the flock of Jehovah,[2] for two generations scattered and wretched, but now gathered once more into the green pastures of their own land. This was "the reward" of Jehovah.

11 He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs in His arms, and carry them in His bosom,[3] and gently lead those that are giving suck.[4]

The redemption of Israel from Babylon was, however, so mighty an undertaking, that it might seem impossible. But to this comes the answer, that Jehovah is Almighty. No human counsel was equal to carry it through, but Jehovah is All-Wise. What though the heathen might oppose them? Who are they to resist God?

12 Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out the heaven with the span, and put the dust of the earth into a measure,[5] and weighed the mountains in a steelyard,

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[1] This passage may refer to the ransomed exiles as the reward and recompense of His might, exerted on their behalf.

[2] Ps. lxxvii. 20; lxxx. 1. Jer. xiii. 17; xxxi. 10; l. 19. Ezek. xxxiv. 11–16.

[3] The great pocket-like fold of his loose tunic. A figure from Jewish customs. Num. xi. 12. Isa. lx. 12; lxvi. 12. See vol. v. p. 380.

[4] See Gen. xxxiii. 13. To drive the flocks too quickly, even for a single day, would kill those that were giving suck. *Gesenius.* Isa. ii. 40. *Land and Book*, p. 204.

[5] A shalish—the third of an ephah, which is given by Josephus as over eight gallons, and by the Rabbis as over four.

and the hills in a balance? 13 Who has directed[1] the Spirit of Jehovah, or,[2] as His counsellor, has taught Him? 14 With whom has He deliberated, that he whom He thus consulted might give Him information, and teach Him the right way, and supply Him with knowledge, and show Him the path of wisdom? 15 Behold, nations are counted by Him as a drop from a bucket, and as a grain of dust on the balance: behold, He lifts up the isles like fine dust,[3] and (the forests of) Lebanon are not sufficient to burn (on His altar), nor its wild beasts for a burnt-offering! 17 All the nations are as nothing before Him—in His eyes they are as things of nought; as if they were only an empty nothing![4]

So great is Jehovah. Yet men have worshipped idols, which their own hands have made, as similitudes of the Eternal. The rich have idols of gold, the poor of wood, but how could either think that their images were like Him who reigns, unseen, in the heavens? The infinite distance between Him and even the greatest of earth, shows that He cannot be embodied in outward form. It is monstrous even to think of it.

18 To whom then will ye liken (this great) God, and under what likeness will ye represent Him? 19 The craftsman casts the image, the goldsmith covers it over with plates of gold, and forges silver chains (to hold it in its niche). 20 The poor man, who can offer little to his god, choses a log that is free from wormholes, and then seeks a skilled workman, to set up (from it) an idol which cannot move from its place.

21 Know you not? Have ye not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have ye not known from the foundation

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[1] The same word as "meted out," in ver. 12. The question is equivalent to, Who has contributed help to the wisdom and omnipotence of God?

[2] What man.

[3] "Dak," the word here, may also mean a withered ear of corn.

[4] Lit., "And as emptiness"—the word used, "Tohu," is that applied to the vacancy of chaos before creation began.

of the earth? 22 (God is) He who sits throned over the vault of the earth—its inhabitants, (shewing far beneath) like grasshoppers; who has stretched out the hollow heavens as a transparent veil,[1] and spread them out as a tent to dwell in; 23 who brings princes[2] to nothing; who makes the judges of the earth as less than nought.[3] 24 They are scarcely planted; they are scarcely sown; scarcely has their stock taken root in the earth, when He blows on them and they shrivel up, and the storm-wind sweeps them away like chaff (from the threshing floor).

25 To whom, then, will ye liken Me that I may resemble him, saith the Holy One? Lift up your eyes on high and behold: who has created these things? It is Jehovah! He leads out their host in numbered array,[4] and reads out the roll-call of all their names. In awe of His great might and the majesty of His power, not one fails (to answer).[5]

The long delay in the deliverance from Babylon had sunk Israel in despondency, as if God had forgotten them, or overlooked their interests amidst the cares of His immeasurable empire. But it was utterly wrong and foolish to think so.

27 Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, "My way is hidden from Jehovah: my right has been overlooked by my God?" 28 Dost thou not know, hast thou not heard—the eternal God, Jehovah, is the Creator of the ends of the earth, who faints not, neither is weary; there is no searching of His understanding. 29 He gives strength to the weary and renews the powers of the faint. 30 Yea, though even youths may faint and be exhausted, and young men fall down, 31 yet they that trust in Jehovah[6] shall get fresh strength; they will lift up their wings like eagles,[7] they will run and not be weary, they will walk and not faint!

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[1] Lit., "the finest cloth," through which one can see. The word occurs only once in the Bible. The heavens are the tent cloth over the earth.

[2] Lit, "the heavy" = "the august." [3] Heb., Tohu = chaos.

[4] Like soldiers moving abreast in their battalions.

[5] To the roll call. [6] Or, wait for. [7] 2 Sam. i. 23.

The prophet now passes to another step in his great argument. Present, in spirit, in the times immediately preceding the Return, he describes Jehovah as summoning the heathen nations before Him, to judge between His claims and those of idol-gods, from the predicted career of the appointed deliverer of His people—Cyrus, the Elamite. He had raised him up and made him triumphant, nor could the idols resist his might.

1 Be silent before Me,[1] O islands (and coasts of the west),[2] and let the peoples collect their strength anew, (to oppose Me, and defend their gods); let them come near and speak; let us come together, and argue the matter (between Me and their idols). 2 "Who raised up from the East[3] the man whom the righteousness (of Jehovah) calleth to follow His steps,[4] giving up the nations before him, and making him tread on (the necks of) kings; making them like dust before his sword, and like stubble driven by the wind, before his bow. 3 He pursued them, he marched on safely[5] by ways which his feet had not trodden before.[6]

4 "Who did all this and carried it out? I who have called (to life) the generations (of men) from the beginning—I, Jehovah, the First, and with the Last—the Everlasting I."[7]

The terror of all lands, before him whom Jehovah thus sent against them, was overwhelming. Men appealed to their gods, set up new ones, encouraged each other

[1] Isa. xli. 1-7. [2] Threatened by Cyrus.

[3] Elam was east of Babylon. In ver. 25 Cyrus is said to come from the North, because Media, which also he ruled, was north of Babylon.

[4] This seems to me the best rendering of the clause. Diestel and many others render righteousness as equivalent to victory—and read, "Whom victory meets at every footstep."

[5] Lit., "in peace."

[6] The Assyrian kings often boast of marching over countries never before invaded, or trackless.

[7] Isa. xlviii. 6; xlviii. 12.

to hope in them—but all in vain. Before Cyrus took Babylon, he had marched in triumph from the heights of the Hindu Koosh to the shores of the Grecian Archipelago, humbling nation after nation.[1]

5 The isles[2] (and coasts) saw and were afraid, the ends of the earth[3] trembled—they draw together and come to each other (to unite and ally themselves against the dreaded invader). 6 Every one helps his neighbour and says to his fellow, "Be strong."[4]

Especially is this the case with the makers of idols. They propose to make new gods from whom to ask counsel and obtain protection.

7 The metal-founder cheers the maker of gold and silver plates, and he that fits them on the idol, and smooths them with the hammer, cheers up the smith who works at the anvil, saying of the work when put together, "It is beautiful," and he makes it fast with nails that it may not fall.[5]

Yet, if the heathen had reason to be terrified, Israel need not fear.

8 But thou, Israel, My servant, Jăcob whom I have chosen, the sons of Abraham, My friend,[6] 9 thou whom I have brought from the ends of the earth and called from its uttermost parts,[7] and said to thee, Thou art My servant; I have chosen thee and have not cast thee off (since). 10 Fear not, for I am with thee; look

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[1] Pahle's *Gesch. des Orient. Alterthums*, p. 170.

[2] The word rendered "isles" means also "coasts."

[3] The Westlands = Europe.

[4] Herodotus tells us that Egyptians, Thracians, Cypriotes, Arabs, Phenicians, Greeks, and people of Asia Minor, were united under Crœsus of Lydia, to oppose Cyrus. *Herod.*, i. 28, 69, 70, 77.

[5] This would be the worst of omens.

[6] Lit., "that loved Me."

[7] Either of the call of Abraham from Mesopotamia, or of that of Israel from Egypt, though this is not so suitable, since Egypt was hardly the ends of the earth to the Jew.

not round (in terror),[1] for I am thy God, I will help thee, yea, I will hold thee up with the right hand of My righteousness. 11 Behold all they that burned with rage against thee shall be ashamed and confounded, they who strove with thee will be brought to nought and perish. 12 Thou shalt seek them but shalt not find them; those who contended with thee, and they who fought against thee, shall be brought to nought and utterly destroyed. 13 For I, Jehovah, thy God, hold fast thy right hand; I who say to thee "Fear not,"—I will help thee.

THRESHING SLEDGE.

Instead of being crushed, Israel will, with God's help, destroy all its foes.

15 Fear not, thou worm Jacob, ye feeble folk of Israel: I will help thee, says Jehovah; thy Redeemer[2] is the Holy One of

[1] Or for help, *Gesenius*.

[2] Heb., Göel. Gen. xlviii. 16. Lev. xxv. 25, 26. Num. v. 8; xxxv. 12; xxxv. 19. Ruth iv. 1. Job xix. 25. Ps. xix. 14; lxxviii. 35. Isa. xliii. 14: xliv. 6, 24; xlvii. 4; etc. etc. For the meaning

Israel. Behold, I will make thee a threshing sledge, sharp, new, with many cutting-stones in its roller;[1] thou shalt thresh mountains and crush them small, and make hills[2] as chaff. 16 Thou shalt winnow them, and the wind shall carry them away and the tempest shall scatter them; but *thou* shalt exult in Jehovah and glory in the Holy One of Israel.

The misery of the Exile and the joy that is to follow are again painted. Even the desert, which they must cross to regain Canaan, will blossom before them. How much more glorious then will be their own land itself!

17 The distressed and poor ones—(the flock of Israel coming back from Babylon), seek water (in the desert) and there is none, and their tongue is dried up for thirst! (But) I, Jehovah, will hear them: the God of Israel will not forsake them! 18 I will open streams on the bare hills in the midst of the plains:[3] I will make the wilderness ponds of water,[4] and parched land spring-heads[5] of water. 19 (And to give you shade and fruit on your march), I will make the cedar grow in the wilderness, the acacia, the myrtle,[6] and the olive; I will plant in the desert the cypress,

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of the word, see vol. iii. p 14. The idea is, one charged with the task of restoring the rights of another and avenging his wrongs.

[1] See vol. iv. p. 372. Mic. iv. 13.

[2] Those who opposed the deliverance of the exiles.

[3] The word is applied in Scripture to "the *Valley* of Jericho," "the Plain of Dura" at Babylon, and "the plain of Mesopotamia." Jericho did not lie in a *valley*, but on a plain.

[4] The Heb. word (sing.) is used specially of the pools left by the Nile after its inundations. Similar figures are used Isa. xxx. 25; xxxiii. 7; xliv. 3, 4.

[5] The word is from the verb to "go forth."

[6] The Heb. word "hadās," the myrtle, occurs elsewhere only Isa. lv. 13. and in post-exilic books, Neh. viii. 15; Zech. i. 8, 10, 11. The name Hadassah, "the myrtle," is found in Esth. ii. 7. But myrtles grew wild in Palestine, and there is no older name used for them, so that no argument for the age of the second part of this Book can be founded on Isaiah being the first to refer to the myrtle.

the plane, and the fig tree,[1] 20 that they may both see and acknowledge, and consider and take to heart, that the hand of Jehovah has done this, and that the Holy One of Israel has created it.

The prophet now reverts to the controversy with the idols, proposed by Jehovah in the opening of the chapter. He no longer, however, addresses their worshippers, but speaks to the idols themselves. They are nothing, since they have not foreknown, far less brought about, the great events by which the kingdom of God is to be promoted. Jehovah alone knew these beforehand and caused their realization.

THE PLANE TREE (PLATANUS ORIENTALIS).

21 "Bring forward your case (O ye idols)," says Jehovah, "produce your strong arguments[2] (in your defence)" says the King of Jacob. 22 Yes, let them bring them forward, and tell us what will happen hereafter! Let them tell what will happen in the immediate future, that we may note it and watch the issue, or

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[1] These last two names are uncertain. The one has been rendered "the elm," "the plane," and "the fig," the other "the elm," "the box," the "Scherbin-cedar" of Lebanon, and "the fig." I choose "fig" as the counterpart of "olive" in the former clause.

[2] Lit., "grounds of defence."

let us hear what lies hidden in times more remote.[1] 23 Reveal what is to happen hereafter, that we may acknowledge you to be gods; do good or do evil—(do something)—that we may at once wonder and behold. 24 Lo, ye are airy nothings,[2] and your works are the same;[3] he is an abomination who chooses you (for his gods)!

25 I (Jehovah) have raised up one from the north[4] and he is come; from the rising of the sun[5] he calls on My name! He shall trample on lofty princes as if they were mortar,[6] and as the potter treads the clay. 26 Who foretold this from the beginning, that we might know it? Who announced it beforehand, that we might say He is right? There is no man amongst you who predicted it—no one that revealed it—no one that heard a word from you on these matters![7] 27 I, Jehovah, first said to Zion, "Behold, behold them,"[8] and gave Jerusalem a bearer of the glad news.[9] 28 But when I look (among your false prophets) there is no one among their whole crowd,[10] (who has foretold the future as I have done) there is no counsellor that I may ask through him, and get any answer. 29 Behold they are all vanity; they can do nothing; their molten images are wind and emptiness![11]

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[1] Or, let them tell the first beginnings of things in the past, or what lies hidden in the future.

[2] Lit., "spring from nothing."

[3] The word as it stands in the Hebrew occurs nowhere else, and is unintelligible. The Vulg. and other versions adopt an emendation, meaning "of nought."

[4] Media.

[5] Elam—Cyrus united Media, Elam and Persia under him.

[6] Mortar is made in the East by treading.

[7] Lit., "your words."

[8] The things to come, or the returning exiles.

[9] "The first who gave a herald of good to Zion, even to Jerusalem—one who said, Behold, behold them."—*Ewald.*

[10] Lit., "them."

[11] Tohu.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE FIFTH GOSPEL.

THE second part of Isaiah evidently consists, like the other prophetical writings, of a series of public addresses, or compositions which are parts of a related whole. The great prophet-poet returns again and again to his task of comforting the people of God, not only under the sorrows of exile, but under the deeper trial of an apparently long delay in the appearance of the promised Messiah, who should "restore Israel." He had already spoken of his nation as "the servant of Jehovah,"[1] but he now uses the title in a way incompatible with a merely figurative and collective meaning. Jeremiah and Ezekiel,[2] like him, had applied it to the Chosen People, but in many passages of Isaiah it is associated with striking personal traits which imply some individual reference. It cannot refer to the prophet himself, for the dignity ascribed to the Servant of Jehovah is far above that of any prophet, and implies much that no man could ever perform. Hence even the Targum applies the phrase to the Messiah, thus showing the sense in which it has been instinctively

[1] Isa. xli. 8.

[2] Jer. xxx. 10; xlvi. 27, 28. Ezek. xxxvii. 25.

understood, by the Jews themselves, from the earliest times, and pointing out the only adequate application. The view of the subject taken by Delitzsch and Oehler, and adopted by Cheyne, seems to me, therefore, substantially correct. The conception of the Servant of God, we are told, may be compared to a pyramid. The base is Israel as a whole; above that is Israel in a spiritual sense, and the apex is the person of the mediating Saviour who rose out of Israel.[1] "In its highest application," says Delitzsch, "I regard it as a prefiguration of the suffering and glorified Redeemer, Jesus Christ, our Lord; as indeed, many passages of the New Testament directly intimate."

Israel as a whole is, thus, in a lower sense, the Servant of Jehovah; but this dignity the prophet now ascribes to one who is the flower and glory of the people of God, His "Servant" in the sublimest fulness of the term, through whom His gracious designs, carried so far towards their fulfilment by Israel as a nation, are to be triumphantly completed. The judgments of God on the heathen, casting contempt on their idols, must be accomplished by the conqueror of the nations, but the Servant of God will bring to mankind at large the highest of all blessings, as the Prince of Peace.

1 Behold My servant[2] whom I uphold; My elect, in whom My soul delighteth.[3] I have put My Spirit upon him; My law shall he make known to the nations.[4] 2 He shall not cry nor shout,

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[1] Delitzsch, *Iesaia*, p. 414. Oehler, *Old Test. Theol.*, vol. ii. p. 399. Cheyne, *Isaiah*, vol. i. p. 253.

[2] Isa. xlii.

[3] Matt. xii. 18; xix. 20. Phil. ii. 7. Matt. iii. 17; xvii. 5. Eph. i. 6. Isa. iii. 34.

[4] "Law," Heb., Mishpat. Even Gesenius remarks that the sense in which the word is to be taken is shown by ver. 4 and

nor cause his voice to be heard in the street; 3 a bruised reed shall he not break off and a faintly glimmering wick shall he not quench; he shall make known the law according to truth. 4 He will not faint or give way[1] till he has established the Law in the earth, and the nations[2] will (eagerly) look for his teaching.[3]

The Servant of Jehovah is now directly addressed, and the work He is commissioned to do is more minutely defined. Its greatness is to be estimated by the sublimity of the language in which it is introduced.

5 Thus says God,[4] Jehovah, that created the heavens and stretched them out; that spread out the earth and all that springs from it; that gives health to its population and life to them that walk on it; 6 I, Jehovah, have called thee in righteousness and will hold thy hand, and will keep thee (in My care), and give thee for a covenant of the people,[5] for a light of the nations; 7 to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon, and those that sit in darkness from the prison houses.[6]

To this announcement respecting the Servant of Jehovah, the prophet hastens to add that Jehovah, who has been silent so long, will speedily go forth against the oppressor of His people, and when they are freed, will lead them back to their own land amidst the rejoicings of mankind.

chap. li. 4, adding that it means "the law of God, the religion of Jehovah." *Jesaia*, vol. ii. p. 60. Mishpat comes from the root "to judge."

[1] Same word as "break off."

[2] Lit., "islands."

[3] His "Torah," his teaching of the law of God.

[4] Lit., "The God" the true God, in contrast to idols.

[5] The mediator of a covenant between Jehovah and Israel. See for similar expressions, Isa. xlix. 6; Mal. v. 5; John xi. 25. The covenant is that promised in Jer. xxxi. 31–34.

[6] Dungeons were, thus, underground and without light. So it was in the case of Jeremiah—shut up in a subterranean cistern.

8 I am Jehovah, that is My name, and My glory will I not give to another, neither My praise to graven images. 9 Behold, the first things (I foretold) are come to pass:[1] I now announce what is new: before it springs forth[2] I tell you of it.

10 Sing to Jehovah a new song; His praise from the ends of the earth, ye that go down to the sea,[3] and all that sail upon its waters;[4] its coasts and islands, and all that dwell in them. 11 Let the wilderness and its settled villages lift up their voice, and the encampments that Kedar[5] inhabits. Let the inhabitants of the rock city—Selah[6]—shout for joy, let them rejoice aloud from the top of the mountains. 12 Let men give glory to Jehovah, and proclaim His praise to the islands. 13 Jehovah will go forth as a mighty warrior; He will rouse Himself (against the enemies of His people), like a man of (many) wars: He will shout, yea roar (the cry of battle); He will show Himself a Hero against His foes.

## Jehovah Himself tells us why He will thus make bare His mighty arm.

14 I have long held My peace, I have been still and restrained Myself. But, now, I will raise the battle cry, loud as that of a woman in her trouble; I will, at once, breathe thick (in My fury) and snort (in My burning indignation). 15 I will wither the mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbage (with the fiery breath of My wrath). I will turn streams to dry land (by it), and dry up the pools of water (with its scorching heat). 16 And (having freed My people from the oppressor) I will lead them as one leads the blind, by a way which they knew not: I will bring them by paths they have not known: I will make the night of the track-

[1] The career of Cyrus as world-conqueror, etc.

[2] The figure is from the budding of a tree.

[3] From the hills on which Judah lived.

[4] Lit., "its fulness." Cheyne and others apply the phrase to the fish, but this is quite out of keeping with the context.

[5] Kedar, "living in tents," as distinguished from the towns of the settled Arabs; a contrast still maintained in the East.

[6] Or, Petra.

less desert light before them,[1] and rough places smooth as the *mishor*.[2] These words I will perform; I will not fail.

Awed by this, and smitten by the hand of God, the heathen will be kept from impeding the return of His people.

17 They shall shrink back; they shall be ashamed that trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, "Ye are our gods."

Israel is now addressed. Though thus to be freed by the hand of Jehovah, it had no claim to be so from any merits of its own. Called to be the servant of Jehovah, it had been "unprofitable," and the Captivity, with all its sorrows, had been punishment divinely inflicted for long continued sin. The same thought is repeated by Ezekiel, in the words "I do not this for your sakes, O House of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went."[3] Another and infinitely higher "Servant" must take the place of one so deaf and blind to the voice and wonders of Jehovah as Israel had been, and carry out His work!

18 Hear ye deaf, and look ye blind, that ye may see. 19 Who is blind, but (Israel), My servant? or deaf as he—My messenger whom I sent? Who is blind as he who was trusted by God;[4] or blind as Jehovah's servant! 20 Thou hast seen much, yet hast not observed it; thou hast opened thine ears, but hast not paid heed. 21 Jehovah was pleased, for His righteousness' sake, to give (thee) great and glorious 22 teaching of His Law (through

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[1] Their ignorance of the way was like the darkness of one blind. The desert is often spoken of as dark, in this sense. Isa. xlv. 19. Jer. ii. 6, 31. Job xii. 25; xviii. 18; xxx. 3

[2] Vol. ii. p. 374.

[3] Ezek. xxxvi. 22, 32, etc.

[4] Friend of God. *Gesenius. Knobel.*

the prophets). Yet (instead of the good it should have brought), Israel is (to-day) a people robbed and spoiled; shut up in dungeons, hid in prisons, a prey, without a deliverer; a spoil, with no one to say "give back." 23 Who among you will listen to this and attend, and give heed for time to come? 24 Who was it that gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to robbers? Was it not Jehovah, against whom we have sinned? in whose ways Israel would not walk, and whose law he would not obey? 25 It was for this He poured the fury of His anger on him, and the miseries of war. These set him on flames round about, but he did not recognise God's hand; they burned amidst his sons, yet he laid it not to heart.

Yet Israel, though thus blind and deaf, and to a great extent impenitent, will be redeemed and re-established gloriously, since Jehovah has chosen the nation and loves it.

1 Yet, now, thus says Jehovah,[1] who created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel; fear not, for I will redeem thee,[2] I have called thee by thy name—"My people;" thou art Mine. 2 When thou passest through the waters, I shall be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee! 3 For I, Jehovah, am thy God; I, the Holy One of Israel, am thy Saviour. I give Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Sheba in thy stead.[3] 4 Because thou art so dear in My sight, so prized, so precious to Me, I will give (common) men[4] in thy stead and peoples for thy life.

5 Fear not, for I am with thee; I will bring thy sons from the sun-rising and gather thee from the West. 6 I will say to the North, "give up;" and to the South, "keep not back," bring My

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[1] Isa. xliii.

[2] Lit., "I have redeemed thee." The redemption was determined, but not yet carried out.

[3] This prophecy was literally fulfilled. Cambyses carried out the conquest of Egypt which Cyrus had planned, and extended the Persian conquests far and near.

[4] Jer. xxxii. 20.

sons from far, and My daughters from the end of the earth;[1] 7 every one who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed and prepared (for that end).

The prophet is next addressed.

8 Bring forth the blind people that have eyes (and do not use them), and the deaf who have ears (but will not hear). (Bring them to an open space, where the controversy between the true God and the idols may be settled before the heathen nations, who also are to assemble there). 9 Ye heathen nations, all of you, assemble, and let the peoples gather together! Who among you (of your prophets), can announce such things, and tell us their predictions delivered in the past (and now proved true). Let them produce their witnesses, that they may be vindicated, and let these hear and say—It is the truth. 10 Ye (men of Israel) who fear My name, are *My* witnesses, says Jehovah, ye are my servant, whom I have chosen; that ye may acknowledge and believe Me, and understand that I am He (and that) before Me no God was formed, and after Me there shall be none. 11 I—I, am Jehovah, and besides me there is no Saviour. 12 I—I (alone) have foretold what is to happen and have saved (you), and have revealed beforehand (that I would do so); it was no strange god among you that did this; ye are My witnesses, says Jehovah, that I am, (thus, the only true) God. 13 In the future, also, I am He, and no one can deliver out of My hand. I work and who can hinder Me?

The prophet now introduces a renewed prediction of the destruction of Babylon.

14 Thus says Jehovah, your Redeemer,[2] the Holy One of Israel: For your sakes have I sent (the foe) to Babylon, and will drive out,[3] as fugitives, all its (mixed) population, and the Chaldeans (themselves), who shall flee in anguish to the ships, hitherto their pride.[4] 15 I, Jehovah, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King, (will do it)!

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[1] So widely scattered were the Jews even then.

[2] Or Gŏ̈l. See p. 306.

[3] Lit., "down," Babylon being figured as a proud and lofty city.

[4] *Herod.*, i. 194, describes the vessels of the Babylonians, and

The deliverance from Egypt is introduced as a pledge for the fulfilment of all this.

16 Thus says Jehovah, who makes a road through the sea, and a path through the mighty waters; 17 who leads forth (to their doom) chariot and horse, army and power:[1] they lie down

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the ships of Ur are often mentioned in early inscriptions. See vol. i. p. 302. The merchandise of Arabia was carried to Babylon in ships.—*Strabo*, xvi. 4, § 18. The later inscriptions show that numerous vessels were always to be found at the mouth of the Euphrates, and that they constantly sailed over the Persian Gulf. It is uncertain whether they ventured beyond its head-lands, into the open Indian Ocean: but there is reason to believe that by some means or other they obtained Indian commodities, which would come most readily by this sea-route. The teak found in their buildings, the ivory and ebony which they almost certainly used, the cinnamon and the cotton in the large quantities which they consumed, can only have come from the peninsula of Hindustan, and cannot be supposed to have travelled by the circuitous route of Cabul and Bactria. Arabian spices were conveyed by the Gerrhæans, in their ships, to Babylon itself, and it is probable that the rest of the Gulf trade was chiefly in their hands. Perfumes of all kinds, pearls, wood for shipbuilding, walking-sticks, cotton, gems, gold, and Indian fabrics, flowed into the Chaldæan capital from the sea, being mostly brought to it up the Euphrates in ships, and deposited on the quays at the merchants' doors. Æschylus calls the Babylonians who served in the army of Xerxes, "navigators of ships."* Commercial dealings among the dwellers in the city, on a most extensive scale, are disclosed by the Egibi tablets;† "spice-merchants" appear among the witnesses to deeds.‡ Their own records and the accounts of the Greeks are thus in the completest agreement with the prophet when he describes Babylon as "a land of traffick . . . a city of merchants."—Rawlinson, in *Clergyman's Magazine*, 1883, p. 105. See also Riehm's *Handwörterbuch*, p. 248.

[1] An allusion to the overthrow of Pharaoh in the Red Sea.

* Æschyl., *Pers.*, ll. 52-55.
† *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archæology*, vol. vii. pp. 1-78.
‡ *Records of the Past*, vol. xi. p. 94.

together (at His word), they shall not rise; they are extinguished; they are put out like the wick of a lamp!

18 (Yet ye need not) call to mind former things, nor ponder those of the past; 19 behold, I am about to do what is new; it is even now budding forth, lo, ye shall see it! I will make a road through the waste, and streams in the desert. 20 Even the beast of the field will praise Me, the thirsty jackals and the ostriches, because I give waters in the waste and streams in the desert, for drink to My people, My chosen, 21 the people whom I have formed for Myself; who (also, like these creatures) shall declare My praise (for such supplies in such a region).

Once more it is proclaimed that all this is of God's free grace, for the honour of His great name; not for any merit or painful service rendered by Israel.

22 (I do this) though thou hast not called upon Me, O Jacob, much less wearied thyself,[1] (in My service) O Israel. 23 Thou hast not brought Me (in Babylon, as thou didst formerly in Judah) the sheep of thy burnt offerings, neither hast thou honoured Me with thy other sacrifices, nor have I burdened thee with food-offerings, nor wearied thee with (burning) incense. 24 Thou hast not bought for Me, with silver, the costly fragrant Arabian reed, for holy oil,[2] and thou hast not sated Me with the fat of thy sacrifices. But thou hast tired Me out[3] with thy sins, thou hast wearied Me with thine iniquities!

25 I, I alone, blot out thy transgressions, for My own sake, and will remember thy sins no longer. 26 (Yet if thou thinkest thou hast anything to urge for thyself) put Me in remembrance (of it); let us try the matter together; state what thou canst, to justify thyself. 27 (But thou canst say nothing, for even) thy first father (Jacob) sinned, and they that mediated[4] between Me and thee—thy prophets and priests—have been faithless to Me. 28 For this cause have I dishonoured thy holy princes, the

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[1] The minute and wearisome observances of the ceremonial law—its sacrifices, offerings, and Levitical rites, could not be observed in Babylon. [2] Exod. xxx. 23. Jer. vi. 20.

[3] Lit., "loaded Me like a slave." [4] Lit., "mediators."

high priests,[1] and have given over Jacob to ruin,[2] and Israel to reproach.

Notwithstanding all this, Jehovah, for His love's sake, and for His honour,[3] will blot out the recollection of the sins of His people, and load them with blessing.

1 Yet now hear,[4] O Jacob, My servant, and Israel, whom I have chosen. 2 Thus says Jehovah, thy Creator, that formed thee from the womb, who is thy Helper: Fear not, O Jacob, My servant, and thou, Jeshurun,[5] whom I have chosen. 3 For I will pour out water for the thirsty, and streams over the parched land; I will pour out My Spirit on thy seed, and My blessing upon thy offspring. 4 And they will spring up as grass beside flowing waters,[6] and as poplars by watercourses. 5 One will say, "I am Jehovah's"; another will joyfully praise the name of Jacob; and a third will make the mark of Jehovah on his hand,[7] and boast of Israel as a name of honour.[8]

The intense hatred of the prophet to the idolatry which had so depraved his nation under Manasseh and Ahaz, and survived only too vigorously even in Babylon,[9] now breaks out again in a vivid contrast of the greatness of Jehovah as compared with the gods of the heathen. There must have been great danger of the Hebrews

[1] 1 Chron. xxiv. 5. Jer. lii. 24.

[2] Lit., have "put him under My ban," devoted him to destruction. See vol. ii. p. 396, note.

[3] Isa. xliii. 4, 25. [4] Isa. xliv.

[5] A diminutive of endearment = "the worthy people."

[6] Vulgate. So, virtually, Sept.

[7] Slaves bore the name of their master,—soldiers, of their leader,—idolaters, of their god,—branded or tattooed on their forehead or on their hand. So it would be done towards Jehovah by His willing servants. Eichhorn translates the clause, "will imprint on his hand 'Sacred to Jehovah.'"

[8] "Soothingly names the name of Israel."—*Gesenius.* The verb means "to deck with a title," "to call by an honourable name."

[9] See Ezek. *passim.*

finally apostatizing from their national faith, to lead to such denunciations of idols. Heathenism surrounds our countrymen in India as much as it did the Jews either in Judea or on the Chebar, but it would be strange to an Anglo-Indian audience, firm in their belief in one God, if their preachers dwelt on the risk of their becoming idolaters, as the prophets felt necessary in the case of their brethren during the Captivity. Jehovah, we are again told, has long since predicted the deliverance of His people, and will prove His divinity by the fulfilment of His Word, while the idols have foretold or carried out nothing.

6 Thus says Jehovah,[1] the King of Israel, and his Redeemer,[2] Jehovah of Hosts: I am the First and the Last, and beside Me there is no god. 7 Who foretells[3] as I do, ever since I founded this ancient people—let them show it and make it plain? and let them, also, reveal the future, and show what will come hereafter.

Israel needs not fear: Jehovah designs good for it.

8 Fear ye not, neither be alarmed; have not I long since made known to you and declared (what was coming)? Ye are My witnesses. Is there a God beside Me? There is no (other) Rock—(no other true god); I know of none.

While Israel can boast in Jehovah, the heathen have only worthless idols to which to look.

9 The makers of idols are all of them foolish;[4] the things they delight in are worthless! they themselves must confess this,[5] for (these images) neither see nor know, and therefore he is put to 10 shame who makes a god, or casts a molten image, that is good

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[1] Isa. xliv. [2] Heb., Göël.

[3] Lit., "calls"—referring to the discourses of the prophets, as in Isa. xl. 2.

[4] Lit., "chaos." [5] Are their witnesses.

for nothing! 11 Lo, all its worshippers[1] shall be ashamed, for those that make it are only mortals. Let them all assemble and stand up together (to defend their gods); (but, if they do so) they will only tremble and be put to shame together.

The prophet now leads us into an idol manufactory, such as then drove a great trade.

12 The metal-worker[2] sharpens his chisel; he works with the coal[3] (of his forge) and fashions the idol with hammers, and finishes it by the strength of his arms; he grows hungry (at his work) and is exhausted; if he does not drink water he grows faint. 13 The carpenter[4] stretches out his measuring line; marks out the figure of the god with his chalks, works out the details with different tools, and measures the proportions with his compasses, to make it like a human figure, so that, like a comely man, it may dwell in some house.[5] 14 He hews down cedars, and takes the ilex and oak; he chooses for himself from among the trees of the wood; he plants a fig tree[6] and the rain nourishes it, 15 and it serves for firing to him, he takes part of it and warms himself; he kindles part and bakes bread with it, and of part he makes a god and worships it: he makes it into an idol and falls down before it! 16 The one half he has partly burnt in the fire, partly used to make flesh ready to eat; he roasts meat with it and satisfies his hunger, and warms himself, and says "Aha, I am warm, I have enjoyed the fire." 17 And the remainder of it he makes into a god, his graven image, and falling down before it, prostrates himself and prays to it, saying, "Save me, for thou art my god!"

18 They have no sense or understanding, for their eyes are

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[1] Its fellows. Haberim = associates.

[2] Lit., "a cutter of iron." [3] Charcoal. Isa. liv. 16.

[4] The prophet has described the making of an idol of metal; he now describes that of a wooden one.

[5] There was a house-god in each family. The Teraphim had a human form, at least in some cases (1 Sam. xix. 13–16), and so had most idols.

[6] Schrader, *K.A.T.*, 2te Auf., p. 411, the same word is "fig" in Assyrian.

shut[1] so that they do not see, and their heart is closed so that they do not understand. 19 And no one considers in his heart or has sense or understanding to say, "I have burned half of it in the fire, and I have used its coals to bake my bread, and I roasted flesh with it, and ate, and shall I make the other half into an "abomination"? Shall I fall down before a piece of wood grown out of the ground? 20 He who thus delights in what is worthless[2] is led astray by his blinded[3] heart, and he cannot free himself from his errors, or save his soul, or say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?"

Israel should reflect on these things, and cleave to Jehovah, his gracious God and Saviour.

21 Think on these things, O Jacob, and Israel, for thou art My servant. I have proved thee, thou art My servant; O Israel, I will not forget thee. 22 I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as the morning mist[4] thy sins; return to Me, for I have redeemed thee. 23 Sing out, O ye heavens, for Jehovah has done it! Shout aloud, ye valleys and caves of the earth; break forth into jubilee ye mountains, thou forest and all thy trees, for Jehovah has redeemed Jacob, and shown Himself glorious (in His deeds) towards Israel.

The majesty of Jehovah is proclaimed, as Creator of the Universe, and as ruling in the kingdom of Providence, confounding false prophets, confirming the words of His true messengers, and ordaining Cyrus to subdue the heathen, especially the mighty power of Babylon.

24 Thus says Jehovah, thy Redeemer,[5] He that formed thee from the womb,—I, Jehovah, am He who makes all things, that stretched forth the heavens alone, and spread abroad the earth by Myself; 25 that brings to nothing the signs of lying babblers, and makes foolish the soothsayers; that makes "the wise" draw back ashamed, and turns their pretended wisdom to folly: 26 that

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[1] Lit., "plastered over," in this case perhaps "closed by fat."
[2] Lit., "to feed" or "feast" on "ashes." [3] Lit., "deceived."
[4] Hos. vi. 4. [5] Heb., Göēl.

makes the word of His servant stand, and fulfils the predictions of His messengers; [1] that says of Jerusalem, "It shall be once more inhabited," and of the cities of Judah, "They will be rebuilt, I will restore their ruins"; 27 that says to the depths of the waters, "Be dried up, I will dry up thy streams"; [2] 28 that says of Cyrus,[3] "He is My shepherd who will perform all My pleasure,"[4] and of Jerusalem, "Let her be rebuilt," and of the temple, "Let thy foundations be laid." [5]

1 Thus says Jehovah to His anointed,[6] to Cyrus, whose right hand I hold, that nations might be subdued before him, and that I may ungird the loins of kings,[7] and that open before him the wide double gates (of cities), and that the barriers (of towns) may not be shut (against him), 2 I will go before thee and make the hilly ground smooth; two-leaved gates of brass will I break in pieces, and their bars of iron will I cut in sunder,[8] 3 and I will give thee the treasures concealed in darkness, and the wealth of secret hiding places,[9] that thou mayest know that I, Jehovah, the

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[1] The prophets.

[2] The Euphrates is here regarded as a sea, as the Nile in other passages. Cyrus is said to have drained off the great river into another channel, so that the waters sank to a foot deep, and his soldiers could go through it on foot. (*Herod.*, i. 191.)

[3] "Cyrus" was formerly thought to mean "the Sun," but it is really identical with the name of the river Kur. On the monuments it is *Kuru*. See Delitzsch, *Jesaia*, 2te Auf., pp. 265, 470.

[4] Or "work."

[5] Josephus says, "Now this became known to Cyrus by his reading the book of his prophecy which Esaias left behind him. for this man said, that God had spoken thus to him in secret: 'My will is that Cyrus,' etc. This was prophesied by Esaias one hundred and forty years before the demolition of the temple. When, therefore, Cyrus had read this, and marvelled at the Divine power, an earnest impulse and ambition seized upon him to fulfil what was so written." Jos., *Ant.*, XI. i. 2.

[6] Isa. xlv. [7] Make them unfit to meet Cyrus in war.

[8] The gates and bars of Babylon were of brass and iron, *Herod.*, i. 179.

[9] Enormous treasures were stored in the dark recesses of temples and in the underground vaults of the rich. Some of the

God of Israel, am He who called thee by thy name (thus long before). 4 For the sake of Jacob My servant, and Israel My chosen, (not for thine own sake), have I called thee by thy name; I have given thee the honourable title (of "My shepherd") though thou didst not know Me.

5 I am Jehovah and there is none else; there is no God beside Me; I girded thee (for the victorious performance of My will) though thou didst not know Me, 6 that all men may know, from the rising of the sun even to the west, that there is none beside Me. I am Jehovah, and there is none else, 7 the Former of light and the Creator of darkness; the source of good and the dispenser of trouble to man; I, Jehovah, am He who does all this.

8 Drop down (your showers), ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open (her bosom), let salvation blossom forth, and righteousness spring up with it! I, Jehovah, have created it.

But even in Israel, though so wondrously favoured, there were many who murmured at the long delay in the fulfilment of the Divine promises. The folly and danger of such an attitude of heart is vividly depicted.

9 Woe to him who strives with his Creator—(him), a poor potsherd amidst the (million) potsherds of the earth![1] Shall the clay say to him that shapes it, "What makest thou"? Shall thy work say, "He has no hands"? 10 Woe to him who says to his father, "What begettest thou"? or to his mother, "What bringest thou forth"? 11 Thus says Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, concerning things to come; Ask Me, (not your idols or false prophets), for My sons, and for the work of My hands leave Me to care. 12 I made the earth, and created man on it. My hands stretched out the heavens and I lay My commands on all their host. 13 I have raised up him (Cyrus) in righteousness, and I will smooth all his paths before him; he shall build My city, and he shall set free My banished ones, without a redemption price and without a reward, says Jehovah of Hosts.

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greatest hoards remained untouched till they were plundered by Darius. *Herod.*, i. 187.

[1] An allusion to man being made from the earth.

Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Sabæans, subdued by Cyrus, and led off by him triumphantly in chains to Asia, will see the wondrous deliverance vouchsafed to Israel, and will entreat to be united with them, feeling that Jehovah alone is the true God.

14 Thus says Jehovah, the wealth of Egypt and the gains of Ethiopia, and the tall Sabæans, will come over to thee and become thine;[1] they will follow behind thee; they will go in chains and fall before thee, and pay reverence to thee, saying, "God is with thee; there is none else; no God beside."

15 Verily thou art a God who hidest thy purposes; (but, once revealed, they show thee), O God of Israel, to be, (indeed) a Saviour![2]

16 Ashamed and confounded are they all; turned away in confusion are the makers of idols. 17 But Israel shall be saved by Jehovah, with an everlasting salvation: ye will no more be ashamed or confounded for ever. 18 For thus says Jehovah that created the heavens—He is the true God—that made and perfected the earth: He it was who established it, forming it not to be a waste, but to be inhabited. I am Jehovah, and there is none else. 19 I have not spoken (by My prophets) in secret, (but openly); not in some part of the land of darkness:[3] I have not used empty words to the House of Jacob when I said, "Seek Me,"[4] I, Jehovah, speak the truth, I foretell what will surely happen.

Jehovah once more appeals to the heathen themselves to judge His claims compared with those of idols.

20 Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye

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[1] "Thy slaves." Cyrus transferred the Egyptians taken in his battles with Crœsus, to other lands. On the Sabæans, see vol. i. p. 240. [2] Exclamation of the prophet.

[3] Perhaps an allusion to the heathen claim to speak by the dead from Sheol; perhaps to the dark and uninhabited wilderness. Eichhorn translates it, "dark corners of the earth."

[4] Cheyne's translation, "Seek me as chaos," is unintelligible. I have adopted the rendering of Luther and De Wette. Eichhorn and Delitzsch render it "in the deserts;" Ewald, "seek ye Me in vain," as in A.V.

escaped of the nations.[1] They have no understanding that set up the wood of their image, and pray to a god that cannot save. 21 Make known and bring forward your cause;[2] let them—the defenders of the idols—consult together. Who has declared this (great deliverance) from of old? Who has made it known in the past? Was it not I, Jehovah? There is no God else, beside Me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside Me! 22 Turn ye to Me and be ye, (also), saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none else!

23 By Myself have I sworn; from My mouth that speaks truth has gone forth the word, and it shall not be reversed: That unto Me every knee shall bow and every tongue swear homage. 24 In Jehovah alone, shall it be said, are righteousness and might. To Him shall all come and be ashamed, who raged against Him. 25 In Jehovah shall all the seed of Israel be justified and glory.

A new discourse now begins. The gods of Babylon will be overthrown and carried off in triumph. Israel may well trust a God so faithful, and the idol worshippers ponder His mighty acts and seek a share in His favour.

1 Bel[3] sinks down,[4] Nebo falls[5] prostrate;[6] their images are laid

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[1] Primarily, the fugitives of the various nations who had fled before Cyrus. In its higher aspect, as a prediction of the future of the Church in all ages, it may also well refer to the remnant of the heathen who escape the final judgments of God on the earth. See ver. 23.

[2] Arguments in favour of their idols. [3] Isai. xlvi.

[4] Bel = Baal. See vol. i. p. 274; vol. v. p. 400.

[5] Nebo, with Merodach and Bel were the chief gods of Babylon. So great indeed was Nebo, that nearly all the kings have his name incorporated with their own—as Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar, and Nabonidus. Nebuchadnezzar calls himself "the beloved of Nebo, Him who rules over the armies of heaven and earth." This god is also spoken of as "the chief god," the orderer of the world, the god of knowledge, of wisdom, of oaths, the creator of friendship, the author of writing, and the "Scribe of the Universe." *Schrader*, on Isa. xlvi. 1.

[6] By this figurative language respecting the gods of Babylon

on the beasts of burden and the draught-oxen; your gods, which ye carry about, (O Babylonians), are laden on the beasts; they are a heavy load to the weary creatures! 2 The idols fall prostrate,[1] they sink down[2] together, they cannot rescue their images —the load of the beasts,—but are gone[3] into captivity!

3 Hearken unto Me, O House of Jacob and all the remnant of the House of Israel, ye who have been a burden (to Me) from your birth,[4] 4 and have been caressed by Me since your first hour —I am still the same even to your old age (in the distant future), for even to your grey hairs I will carry (you); I have done it (in the past) and will still bear you (in days to come): I will carry you and deliver you.

5 To whom (of the gods) will ye liken Me, with which of them will you put Me on a footing, or compare Me, that we may be equal? 6 They (the heathen)[5] shake out their gold from the bag and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith to make it into a god, and then they fall down and worship it. 7 The workmen take it on their shoulders and carry it, and fix it up in its place, and it stands there, and cannot move from the spot; when one flies to it, it cannot answer, nor save him out of his trouble. 8 Think on this, and act manfully;[6] take it to heart, ye rebellious! and think on the past—what has happened from of old—(My pre-

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nothing more is meant than that the people who worshipped them, and whom they represented, had submitted to a foreign conqueror. As a fact, Cyrus did not disturb the idols, but from the first paid homage to them, as will be shown hereafter, from the inscriptions.

[1] Collapse—sink together.

[2] Lit., "as when one's knees give way."

[3] Lit., "their souls are gone," *i.e.* themselves.

[4] An allusion to the Exodus.

[5] Whether heathen Jews or others.

[6] De Wette, Gesenius, and Eichhorn translate the word thus. Knobel, Delitzsch and Nägelsbach render it "be firm." Cheyne, following Lagarde, has "be deeply ashamed"; but this seems to me to be very forced. The word comes either from an obsolete root, meaning "to crush or press together," as was done with the cakes of dried grapes—or from the word for "man," but as it occurs only in this single passage, critics differ, and always will do so, as to its force.

dictions that have been fulfilled, My mighty deeds wrought for you, which show) that I am God and none else; that I am God, and no one like Me, 10 revealing the end from the beginning, and from ancient times what has not even yet happened. He who says "My counsel shall stand and I will do all My pleasure," 11 who calls a bird of prey from the East,[1] the man who is to execute His purpose, from a far country.[2] Not only have I spoken it, I will also bring it to pass—I have decreed and will carry it out! 12 Hearken unto Me, therefore, ye obdurate[3] ones who are far from being righteous, 13 I have brought near (the full revelation of) My righteousness,[4] it is not far off; My deliverance (of Israel) will not be long delayed, and I will give salvation in Zion and My glory to Israel.

In the next utterance of the prophet the impending doom of Babylon is once more proclaimed. The great city is addressed as a haughty virgin of high birth, who is henceforth to pass from splendour to debasing servitude. Her treatment of Israel is to be returned into her own bosom, and none of her sorcerers or magi will be able to avert the calamity.

1 Come down[5] (from thy throne of glory) and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon. Sit on the ground, not on thy throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans, for thou shalt no more be called "The delicate," and "The luxurious." 2 Take the mill-stones and grind meal, (the work of the lowest slave girl),[6] take

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[1] Elam. [2] Media.

[3] Lit., "stout hearted," (in wickedness). The ungodly and rebellious among the Jews are meant, who refused to believe in the restoration of Israel, or its deliverance by Jehovah.

[4] In freeing Israel, and thus fulfilling His promises.

[5] Isa. xlvii.

[6] Grinding the daily flour of the household was the task of the humblest slave girls. Exod. xi. 5, 12. Job xxxi. 10. Hom., *Od.*, xx. 105–108. The mill consists simply of a great stone mortar, in which the upper stone is turned by a handle like those of our coffee mills. Bovet's *Egypt*, p. 310. Luke xvii. 35. Matt. xxiv. 41. *Land and Book*, p. 527.

off thy veil, cut short the long skirts of thy robe, uncover thy leg, wade through streams! 3 Thy nakedness will be uncovered, and thy dishonour seen. I will take vengeance on thee and spare no man. 4 But our Redeemer,[1] Jehovah of Hosts is His name, is the Holy One of Israel.

5 Sit silent; get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans, for thou shalt no more be called "The mistress of kingdoms." 6 I was wroth with My people (Israel), I dishonoured My inheritance and gave them into thy hands, and thou didst show them no mercy, thou madest thy yoke grievous even to the old (among them). 7 Thou saidst "I will be a queen[2] for ever;" thou didst not take these things to heart, nor remember how they must end.

8 Hear, therefore, thou haughty one, throned, (as thou supposest), in security, and saying in thy heart, "I am (the first of nations); there is no other, besides, like me.[3] I shall never sit a widow, (my kingdom lost), or know the loss of children.[4] 9 Both these calamities will come on thee suddenly, on the same day—loss of children and widowhood; they will come on thee in fullest measure, notwithstanding the multitude of thy divinations, and thy countless magic spells (to ward off evil). 10 Thou fanciedst thyself safe in thy wickedness, thou saidst "no one sees me!" Thy "wisdom"[5] and knowledge have led thee astray, so that thou sayest in thy heart, "I am (the first of nations); there is no other besides." 11 Therefore evil shall come on thee which thou knowest not how to charm away;[6] calamity shall overtake thee, and thou shalt not be able to avert it by thy rites;[7] utter ruin shall befall thee suddenly and unexpectedly![8]

12 Keep on then with thy divinations, and thy many magic arts, in which thou hast toiled since thy youth; it may be that

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[1] Heb., Göël.

[2] Lady, mistress.

[3] Holds the same rank. Other kingdoms were not worthy the name.

[4] The loss of States.

[5] Babylon was the great seat of the "wise" and "learned" in magic arts connected with heathenism.

[6] I agree with Knobel, Diestel, Ewald, Delitzsch, Eichhorn, and others in preferring this reading.

[7] Lit., "to atone for it."

[8] Without thy knowing (beforehand).

thou mayest get good from them, and even strike terror (into thine enemies)! 13 But if thou art wearied with the spells,[1] (prescribed to avert destruction), let those skilled in reading the heavens, the observers of the stars, who tell thee, each new moon, what is about to come on thee, stand up and save thee![2]

But all such helps are vain.

14 Behold, all these (soothsayers and diviners) will be like stubble; the flames (of the coming calamity) will burn up them as well as others; they will not be able to save even their own lives from the conflagration; it will be no gentle fire to warm oneself at, or to sit before!

15 Thus will it be with (these dealers in sorceries) with whom thou weariest thyself, trafficking with them[3] (in their arts) from thy youth—they will flee every one his own way—none shall (be able to) save thee!

A new discourse now begins, addressed to the great body of the exiles. Honouring Jehovah by outward homage, their heart and life were alike contrary to His law. Having predicted their captivity on account of their rebelliousness, long before it took place, He had thus shown Himself to be the only true God. He was about to take steps towards their deliverance. Would that they might even now give ear, and share in the glorious salvation near at hand!

1 Hear ye this, O House of Jacob,[4] called by the name of Israel, come forth from the waters of Judah,[5]—who swear by the name of Jehovah, and praise the God of Israel, but not in sincerity or in righteousness. 2 For they call themselves (children) of the Holy

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[1] "Counsels" given by the diviners.

[2] This is said in irony.

[3] Some prefer to understand this clause of the traders with whom Babylon had driven its mighty commerce.

[4] Isa. xlviii.

[5] The patriarch of the tribe is compared to a fountain head.

City,[1] and stay themselves[2] on the God of Israel, Jehovah of Hosts is His name.

Jehovah alone is to be acknowledged, if only from His having so long before predicted the events about to happen.

3 The former things, (now fulfilled), I announced long ago; out of My mouth they went forth,[3] and I predicted them; I carried them out suddenly (and unexpectedly), and they came to pass. 4 Because I knew that thou wast hard in thy heart, and that thy neck was a sinew of iron,[4] and thy forehead brass, 5 I foretold the future to thee from of old; I declared it to thee before it came to pass, lest thou shouldst say, "My idol has done it, my image of wood and my image of metal have decreed it."[5] 6 Thou hast heard (the prophecies)—there, see them all fulfilled, must not you yourselves own it? From this time forth I foretell new things to you, hidden things which you did not know. 7 They are ordained now, not long ago; thou hast not heard of them before to-day, lest thou shouldst say, "Behold, I knew them." 8 Thou hast neither heard them nor known them, nor was thine ear opened to them in the past, for I knew that thou art altogether untrue to me, and that thou wast called Rebellious from thy birth. 9 (It is only) for My name's sake I have restrained My anger, and for My own glory that I am patient towards thee, not to cut thee off. 10 Behold, I have refined thee, but not as silver (is refined);[6] I have purified thee in the furnace of

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[1] This name for Jerusalem occurs here for the first time. It is found only in Isaiah and the later books, Dan. ix. 24; Neh. xi. 1, 18; Matt. iv. 5; xxvii. 53.

[2] Call on Jehovah; in words, at least, not forsaking Him.

[3] This is the seventh appeal to prophecy as a witness for God.

[4] Like an iron band or collar.

[5] Most of the Jews remained in Babylon among the heathen, whom they imitated more and more, becoming almost a part of them. Ezekiel xx. 30 tells us the fearful extent to which idolatry prevailed among them.

[6] The melting of silver requires a great heat, 1873° of Fahrenheit. The troubles set on Israel were heavy, but not over-

affliction. 11 For My own sake, for My own sake only, will I fulfil My promise,[1] for how should My name be profaned? Nor will I give My glory to another.

Oh that Israel would take to heart that Jehovah alone has foretold what is about to happen, and is thus the only true God!

12 Hearken to me, O Jacob, and Israel, my called one: I am He, I am the First and the Last. 13 My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand spanned the heavens; I spoke My creating word to them, and, forthwith (both earth and heaven) stood up (before me)!

14 All ye (sons of Israel) assemble yourselves and hear. Who among the gods has foretold this (which is about to happen)? He whom Jehovah has loved will perform His will on Babylon, and His chastisement on the Chaldeans! 15 I, I have said it, I have called him, I have brought him, and his way shall be prosperous. 16 Draw near to Me, hear ye this, I have not, from the beginning, spoken in secret. From the time what is happening began, there was I, (directing and ordering all).

The prophet himself next speaks to Israel.

And now the Lord Jehovah has sent me, with His Spirit. 17 Thus says Jehovah, thy Redeemer,[2] the Holy One of Israel: I am Jehovah thy God, who teacheth thee to profit, who leadeth thee in the way thou shouldst go. 18 Oh that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments! Then would thy peace have been (full) as a river, and thy righteousness[3] like the waves of the sea; 19 thy seed, also, would have been as the sand, and thy children

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whelming. Eichhorn renders the verse, "I smelted thee because thou wast not pure silver, and drew off the best from thee in the furnace of affliction."

[1] Lit., "do it."

[2] Goël.

[3] Righteousness is here, from the parallelism, equivalent to "prosperity," given them by God, in His righteousness—that is, in the righteous, or faithful, fulfilment of His promises.

as its grains.[1] Thy[2] name would not have been cut off (from the Holy Land) nor destroyed (in it) from before me.

The faithful remnant of Israel will, however, be delivered. Their triumphant departure from Babylon rises before the eyes of the prophet. Perhaps he intends an appeal to them, to keep this great aim steadily in view.

20 Get ye out of Babylon! flee from Chaldea! Proclaim it! shout it aloud with rejoicing cries! tell it! send it abroad to the ends of the earth! say, "Jehovah has redeemed His servant Jacob, and they suffered no thirst in the deserts through which He led them; for He caused waters to flow out of the rocks for them; He clave the stone and the waters gushed out." 22 But there is no peace, no prosperity, to the ungodly (among you, who follow idols and refuse to hear My voice) says Jehovah!

With the forty-ninth chapter a new section of the book opens. Israel, in its various and often opposing features, is now the theme. The "Servant of Jehovah" is introduced as turning to the heathen nations, and revealing Himself to the Gentiles, in weariness at the stubborn impenitence of the mass of His people.

1 Hearken to me,[3] ye distant isles and coasts of the sea! Listen, ye far-off peoples: Jehovah called me (to His service) from the womb; from my mother's lap He called me by my name (as His servant).[4] 2 He made my mouth like a sharp sword,[5] He hid me in the shadow of His hand (to protect me), and made me a smooth arrow, and put me in His quiver.[6] 3 "Thou art My

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[1] Lit., "entrails," the antecedent is almost necessarily "the sand," but some make "the sea" the antecedent, and translate the word "entrails" as referring to the fish. Cheyne does so, hardly with propriety, as I think. [2] Heb., His.

[3] Isa. xlix. [4] Jer. i. 5. Gal. i. 15.

[5] Heb. iv. 12. Eph. vi. 17. Rev. i. 16; xix. 15.

[6] The figures of the sword and arrow illustrate the power of His words, sharp and penetrating.

servant, O Israel," said He, "in whom I will glorify Myself." 4 But I had said, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain; verily my right, (the recompense of my toil), is with God, and my reward with my God."

But, though for the time cast down, the Servant knows that the time of his reward will come, when he will restore the kingdom of God among men, and spread the worship of Jehovah among the heathen, and himself be raised to high honour.

5 To this replied Jehovah,[1] who formed me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, and that Israel might be gathered to Him; for this am I honoured in the eyes of Jehovah, and my God is become my strength. 6 He answered, I say, speaking thus: "It is too little that thou shouldst be My servant, merely to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to lead back the preserved of Israel: so I appoint thee to be a light to the heathen, that thou mayest be My salvation unto the ends of the earth."[2]

7 Thus says Jehovah, the Redeemer[3] of Israel, his Holy One, to Him who is despised of men, to Him whom the people abhor, to the servant of rulers: kings shall see (Him) and rise up (in His honour), princes shall bow down (before Him) in reverence to Jehovah, who is faithful (to His promises), and to the Holy One of Israel that chose thee.

8 Thus says Jehovah: In the season of grace I will hear thee, and in the day of salvation I will help thee, and I will protect thee, and appoint thee for a covenant of the people, to raise up the land, to portion out the desolate heritages, 9 that thou mayest say to the prisoners "go forth," and to those that are in the darknesses (of dungeons) "come to the light." They shall feed (as the flock of Jehovah) along the ways, and even on all the bare hills there will be pasture for them. 10 They shall not hunger

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[1] *Eichhorn.*

[2] It is clear that this description of the Servant of Jehovah could not refer to "Israel," as some have thought. It can, indeed, apply only to one, the great Messiah, Jesus Christ.

[3] Heb., Göēl.

nor thirst, neither shall the mirage distress them, nor the sun smite them, for He that has pity on them shall lead them, and shall guide them to springs of water. 11 And I will level all My mountains into a (smooth) road, and raise My highways (in the valleys). 12 Behold, these come from far, (in the west), and, lo, these from the distant north, and these from the (southern) sea, and these from the land of China![1]

13 Sing, O Heavens, be joyful, O Earth, break forth into jubilee, O mountains, for Jehovah has comforted His people and has pity on His afflicted ones. 14 Sion said, "Jehovah has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me." 15 Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Even she may forget—yet I will not forget thee! 16 Behold, I have written thy name on the palms of My hands;[2] thy walls are continually before Me. 17 Thy sons shall make haste to thee, (to rebuild thee); those that destroyed and laid thee waste shall depart from thee.

18 Lift up thine eyes round about, O Jerusalem, and look! All these (throngs) gather themselves together and come to thee. As I live, says Jehovah, thou shalt surely array thyself with them as (a woman with her) ornaments, and bind them round thee as a bride doth her girdle of price! 19 Thy ruins and desolate places, and thy ravaged land, will be too narrow for its inhabitants, and those that destroyed thee[3] will be far away. 20 The children born to thee whilst thou layest childless—(thy people carried to exile)—shall yet say in thine ears, "The place is too narrow for me; make room, (my neighbour), that I may have space to dwell." 21 Then shalt thou, (Jerusalem), say in thine heart, "Who has borne me these, seeing I was robbed of my children and unfruitful,—exiled and an outcast? Behold, I was left altogether lonely: where have these been?"

## Even the heathen will aid in the restoration of the banished ones.

[1] Lit., "Sinim." The farthest east of the world. See Ges., *Thes.*, s. v., and Delitzsch, *Jes.*, 2te Auf., pp. 712 ff. The "dispersion" would gather from all the earth. Tsin was an ancient name of China. Nöldeke questions if China be meant, but on weak grounds. *Bibel. Lex.*, vol. v. p. 331.

[2] Isa. xliv. 5.

[3] Lit., "swallowed thee up."

22 Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold I will lift up My hand to the nations, and set up My banner to the peoples, and they shall bring thy (young) sons in their bosom, and thy (young) daughters on their shoulders. 23 And kings shall be thy foster fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers; they shall bow down to thee, with their face to the earth, and kiss the dust of thy feet,[1] and thou shalt know that I am Jehovah—Him, trusting in whom, no one shall be ashamed.

The faint-hearted doubt the possibility of deliverance from Babylon, but the prophet repeats the Divine assurance.

24 "Can the prey be taken from the mighty one; can the captives of the terrible one really escape?"

25 Thus says Jehovah, Even the captives of the mighty one shall be taken (from him), and the prey of the terrible one shall be delivered, for I will fight with him who fights with thee, and I will save thy children. 26 And I will make thy oppressors eat their own flesh—(turning against each other), and they will be drunk with their own blood, as with sweet wine,[2] and all flesh shall know that I, Jehovah, am thy Saviour, and that thy Redeemer is the Mighty One of Jacob.

Jehovah closes this address by repudiating once more the idea that He has cast off Israel, as the murmurers alleged.

1 Thus says Jehovah:[3] Where is your mother's bill of divorcement with which I have dismissed her?[4] To which of My creditors have I sold you, (My children)?[5] Behold, ye were sold

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[1] Lit., "lick up."

[2] After the first victory of Cyrus over the Babylonians, various sections of the Babylonian army deserted to the conqueror, and henceforth fought against their former brethren. (*Cyrop.*, iv. 2.) The Babylonian vassal kings, Gobryas and Gadatas, did the same, and this defection and treachery became general. (*Cyrop.*, iv. 6; v. 1–3; xlvi. 1, etc.)

[3] Isa. l. [4] Deut. xxiv. 1.

[5] 2 Kings iv. 1. Neh. v. 5. Matt. xviii. 25.

for your sins, and for your iniquities was your mother put away. 2 Why, when I came to you (by My prophets), was there no man (who heard and obeyed)? Why, when I called, was there no one to answer (and give ear)? Is My hand too short, (too weak), to redeem (you)? Have I no power to deliver? Behold, by My rebuke I dry up the sea, and turn rivers into dry land; their fish stink because there is no water, and die of thirst. 3 I clothe the heavens with darkness, and cover them with the blackness of sackcloth![1]

A new section now introduces the Servant of Jehovah speaking in his own person.

4 The Lord Jehovah[2] has given me the tongue of the learned, that I may know how to speak comfort to the weary;[3] every morning He wakes my ear—wakes it to hear instruction.[4] 5 The Lord Jehovah has opened my ear, and I have not resisted nor turned away. 6 I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I have not hidden my face from shame and spitting.[5] 7 But the Lord Jehovah will help me, therefore I am not overwhelmed (by such treatment), but have set my face like a flint (against my opponents), and know that I shall not be put to shame. 8 He is near that justifies me; who will contend with me? let us stand forth together. Who is my adversary? let him come near to me. 9 Behold, the Lord Jehovah will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they will all perish like a (moth-eaten) garment, the moth shall

[1] Rev. vi. 12. Isa. xx. 2. Joel i. 8. [2] Isa. l.

[3] Lit., "to help the weary with a word."

[4] Lit., "as the learned."

[5] The exact applicability of this to Our Lord will strike all. Jeremiah also had experience of such shameful treatment (Jer. xx. 2, 7). We find it also in the Messianic Psalm, xxii. 7. Job further speaks of it (Job xxx. 10). Scourging was common (2 Cor. xi. 24). So also the seizing the beard and pulling it out (Neh. xiii. 25). *Hor. Serm.*, iii. 1, 133. See Matt. xx. 67; xxvii. 30; 2 Chron. xxv. 16; Acts v. 40. *Gesenius* quotes a poem, in which the hair torn from the beard of an Abyssinian martyr, and the teeth struck from his mouth, were gathered and sent off to a distance as relics. *Jesaia*, vol. ii. p. 142.

eat them up. 10 Who is there among you that fears Jehovah, that hearkens to the voice of His Servant, though he walk in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of Jehovah and stay himself upon his God.

Destruction will in the end overtake the adversaries.

11 Behold, all ye that kindle a fire (against the godly), and (as it were) gird yourselves with firebrands: Out, get ye into the flame of your own fire, and into the firebrands ye have kindled! This shall ye have from My hand (says Jehovah); ye shall lie down in sorrow![1]

Such discourses, read and pondered by the godly among the exiles, were the means designed by Providence to keep alive and strengthen faith in Jehovah. The preaching of the days of the Captivity comes before us in these verses. "Morning by morning," to use the phrase of the prophets, fresh exhortations quickened the religious revival. The next runs thus:—

1 Hearken to Me,[2] ye that strive after righteousness, and seek Jehovah! Look to the rock from which ye were hewn and the quarry-hole from which ye were dug.[3] 2 Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah, that bare you; how I called Him when only a single individual, and yet blessed and increased Him.[4] 3 For Jehovah will (assuredly) comfort Zion. He will comfort all her ruins: He will make her like Eden, though she is now a wilderness, and like the garden of Jehovah, though she is now a desert; joy and gladness shall (once more) be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

4 Hearken to Me, My people: give ear to Me, O My nation,

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[1] Luke xvi. 24. [2] Isa. li.

[3] A figure for the origin of the nation, explained in the next line.

[4] If Israel was protected from all enemies and blessed when it consisted of Abraham and Sarah alone—the nation being yet unborn—how much more would God protect and bless His people now, against all foes and oppressors!

for instruction will go forth from Me and I will set up My Law for a light of the peoples. 5 My righteousness (in the fulfilment of My promises) is near; My salvation is about to break forth, and My (resistless) arms will judge the nations: the isles (of the west) will hope in Me, and on My arm will they trust.

6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens and look on the earth beneath; for the heavens will vanish away like smoke, and the earth fall to pieces like a moth-eaten garment, and its inhabitants die like flies,[1] but My salvation shall be for ever, and My righteousness will never perish.[2] 7 Hearken to Me, ye who know righteousness, ye people in whose heart is My Law; fear not the reproach of frail men, neither be afraid of their revilings. 8 For the moth shall eat them up as it does a garment, and the worm shall eat them as it does wool, but My righteousness shall be for ever, and My salvation from generation to generation.

Animated by such words from Jehovah, the prophet directly apostrophizes Him, or rather, His mighty arm.

9 Awake! awake! put on strength, O arm of Jehovah! Awake, as in the ancient days, the generations of old. Art not thou the arm that cut off the (Egyptian) sea-monster,[3] that hewed in pieces the dragon[4] (of the Nile). 10 Art thou not it that dried up the (Red) Sea, the waters of that great flood; that made the depths of the sea a path for the ransomed to pass over?

Who can doubt, then, that He will deliver Israel from Babylon!

11 So, the redeemed of Jehovah will return (from Babylon), and come amidst loud rejoicings to Zion; everlasting joy, (like a

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[1] The Chinnim of the Egyptian plagues, Ex. viii. 12, 14; Ps. cv. 31. The Talmudists used the word of lice, but in error.

[2] Lit., "break in pieces (like a ruin)."

[3] Rahab = sea monster, used as a figure of Egypt—Ps. lxxxvii. 4; lxxxix. 11; lxxiv. 13, 14. Pharaoh is spoken of in the same way, Ezek. xxix. 3; xxxii. 3; so also Babylon, Is. xxvii. 1. "Seas," it must be remembered refer to the Nile and its great canals.

[4] The crocodile = "the dragon," is stamped on Roman-Egyptian coins as a symbol of the country. Ges., *Jes.*, vol. ii. p. 146.

garland) on their head; they will reach out their hand to gladness and joy at last, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.[1]

Jehovah again addresses the exiles.

12 I, even I, am your comforter; who art thou that thou art afraid before man who dies; before the son of man who withers like grass,[2] 13 and forgettest Jehovah, thy Maker, that stretched out the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and that thou tremblest continually, all the day long, before the fury of the oppressor, when he draws (the bow) to destroy thee? And where is the fury of the oppressor? 14 The prisoner bowed down in the dungeon will speedily be set free and shall not die in the pit, neither shall his bread fail; 15 for I am Jehovah thy God, who rouseth up the sea so that its waves roar. Jehovah of Hosts is His name. 16 And I put My words in thy mouth, (O servant of Jehovah), and cover thee in the shadow of My hand, to (make a new spiritual order of things), to stretch out (a new) heaven, to lay the foundations of (a new) earth, and to say to Zion "Thou art My people."

The prophet now addresses Jerusalem, as the capital of the glorious Theocracy thus to be set up.

17 Awake! awake! arise, O Jerusalem, who hast emptied, at the hand of Jehovah, the cup of His wrath; who hast drunk and swallowed down the dregs of the great cup that made thee reel. 18 There was no one to lead her[3] of all the sons she had borne; no one of all the sons she had brought up to take her by the hand, (when thus drunk with God's wrath). 19 Two calamities happened to thee, who will console thee? desolation and destruction, famine and the sword, how shall I comfort thee? 20 Thy sons fainted, they lay (powerless) at the corners of all the streets, like a stag caught in a net; they were full of the wrath of Jehovah, the rebuke of thy God.[4]

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[1] The expression is, literally, a figure of one reaching forth the hand and greeting, after a long absence from them.

[2] Lit., "is given (to withering) like grass."

[3] Jerusalem.

[4] The reference is to Jerusalem on the eve of its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar.

21 Therefore, hear now this, thou afflicted and drunken, but not with wine. 22 Thus says thy Lord, Jehovah,—thy God who conducts the cause of His people, Behold I take out of thy hand the cup that made thee reel, the great cup of My wrath; thou shalt not drink it again. 23 I put it into the hand of them that afflicted thee, who said to thy soul, "Cast thyself down that we may walk on thee, and thou madest thy back like the ground and like the street, to them that trod over thee.[1]

1 Awake, Awake,[2] put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy best robes, O Jerusalem, thou holy city! for heathen—uncircumcised and unclean—shall no more come unto thee. 2 Shake off from thee the dust (in which thou hast sat); arise and sit (once more, as a queen): loosen the chains (of thy slavery), from thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.

3 For thus says Jehovah: Ye were sold to Babylon without any payment (for you, to Me, your Lord); ye shall be redeemed from her without money (paid for you, to them). 4 For thus says the Lord Jehovah: My people went down of old[3] to Egypt, to sojourn there (and were oppressed and enslaved), and (at a later time) Assyria oppressed them without provocation. 5 And now—what have I to do here (in Babylon), says Jehovah, since My people have been torn away (from their fatherland) undeservedly, and they that lord it over them yell out their hatred of them, says Jehovah, and My name is continually, all day long, reviled. 6 Therefore My people shall know My name, (in the revelation of My Divine power), and learn in that day, that it is I who say, "Behold, here am I."

Full of glowing hope[4] the prophet sees the great deliverance as if already accomplished, his brethren joyfully proclaiming the good news, and messengers hastening to Judah to announce them there.

7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that

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[1] In the ceremony of the Doseh in Egypt, lines of people cast themselves down side by side, while personages reported holy ride over them. See *Land and Book*, p. 156. Lane's *Modern Egyptians*.

[2] Isa. lii. [3] Lit., "at the first." [4] Isa. lii. 7.

brings good tidings, who proclaims peace, who announces good news, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, "Thy God reigneth!" 8 Hark! thy watchmen (the true prophets)[1] lift up the voice (from their tower of vision); they lift up a prolonged cry of joy,[2] for they see eye to eye—(close at hand)[3]—the return of Jehovah to Zion. 9 Break forth into loud rejoicing, shout all together, ye ruins of Jerusalem, for Jehovah has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem! 10 Jehovah has bared His holy arm[4] in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. 11 Get you out! Get you out! set forth from this place—Babylon—take nothing that is unclean; get ye out of the midst of her; purify yourselves (O Levites), who bear the (sacred Temple) vessels of Jehovah.[5] 12 (But all this can be leisurely done), for ye shall not go out (as from Egypt)[6] in trembling haste, nor will your march be a flight (as it was then); Jehovah will go before you; the God of Israel will guard your rear.

From this vision of the temporal restoration of Israel, we pass to a new and distinct section of the prophet. The Servant of Jehovah, in the most exalted use of the title, is once more introduced, nor can any one hesitate respecting its application who accepts the New Testament as inspired, since the passage is continually referred in the Gospels and Epistles to our Lord Jesus Christ.[7]

[1] Isa. lvi. 10. [2] *Land and Book*, p. 298.

[3] Num. xiv. 14. Exod. xxxiii. 11. Num. xii. 8.

[4] The heroes of antiquity threw back their upper garment from the right arm and shoulder, in order to fight without hindrance. See Ezek. iv. 7. If one were unwilling or unable to fight, he kept his hand in the bosom of his robe. Ps. lxxiv. 11.

[5] The land of Babylon was unclean. They were to take nothing defiled with them, and guard themselves from Levitical impurity, since Jehovah was their leader. The Levites especially, who bore the vessels of the Temple, now restored, were to purify themselves—by cutting the hair, and washing their clothes and persons. Lev. viii. 6. Num. viii. 6 ff.

[6] Exod. xii. 39. Deut. xvi. 3.

[7] Compare Isa. xlii. 1; Matt. xii. 18 ff.; Acts xiii. 47; Isa. xlix

Jehovah is the speaker, and the wondrous story of "His Servant," the subject.

13 Behold[1] My Servant shall prosper; he shall be high and glorious and greatly exalted.

14 In like manner as many were shocked at thee—so marred and unlike that of a man was his visage, and his form unlike that of the sons of men—15 so, will he fill many nations with wonder;[2] kings shall close their mouths before him (in recognition of his higher dignity), for that which had not been told them they shall see, and that which they had not heard they shall behold.

The prophet laments the coldness with which his revelations respecting the Servant of Jehovah will be received, and then proceeds.

8, with 2 Cor. vi. 2. Isa. lii. 15, with Rom. xv. 21. Isa. liii. 1, with John xii. 38; Rom. x. 16. Isa. liii. 4, with Matt. viii. 17. Isa. liii. 5, 6, with 1 Pet. ii. 24. Isa. liii. 7, 8, with Acts v. 32. Isa. liii. 9, with 1 Pet. ii. 22. Isa. liii. 12, with Luke xxii. 37.

Various critics have advanced one or other of the following views. 1. That the Servant of Jehovah was the whole body of the Exiles. 2. The better portion of them. 3 The idealized office of the prophets, especially the Messiah, the ideal of all prophets. 4 The Messiah. The passages especially included in these interpretations are Isa. xlii. 1–7; xlix. 1–9; lii. 12; liii. 12.

[1] Isa. lii.

[2] The verb here is always translated "Sprinkle," in the A. V., but this gives no intelligible meaning. In harmony with Hebrew usage, Jewish interpreters understand it of the dashing up of water, so as to scatter it in separate drops, and apply it to the casting out of the Gentiles before Israel. Mühlau und Volck, following Gesenius (*Thes.*, p. 868), compare the Arab *Naza*—(same sound as Heb. verb), and give the meaning of "springing up for joy or fear." Thence it is used of water "springing up" over any obstacle, and hence of its being sprinkled, or thrown off in drops by any sudden force. "To sprinkle," so as to purify from guilt, is always connected with a preposition, and it would give no fitting parallel here to the rest of the verse.

1 Who has believed[1] our report,[2] and to whom has the arm of Jehovah—His infinite might—been revealed? 2 For he (the Servant of Jehovah) grew up before Him[3] like a tender shoot[4] and as a sucker (from a root) in parched ground; he had no form nor comeliness,[5] and when we looked there was no beauty that we should desire him. 3 He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows[6] and acquainted with grief,[7] and like one before whom we hide our face; he was despised and we esteemed him not. 4 Verily he has borne our pains and carried our sorrows,[8] but we regarded him as one stricken, smitten, and laden with suffering, by God (for his sins). 5 Yet he was pierced for our transgressions, he was beaten down[9] for our iniquities; the chastisement[10] of our peace[11] lay upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. 6 All we, like sheep, had gone astray, we had turned, every one, to his own way, yet Jehovah caused the iniquity of us all to come on him.[12] 7 He was evil treated, but he suffered willingly and opened not his mouth; like the sheep that is led to the slaughter, and the lamb that is dumb before its shearers, so he opened not his mouth. 8 He was taken out of prison and from judgment,[13] and, among his generation, who was there that said to himself, "He was cut off from the land of the living, he was stricken for the transgressions of My people?" 9 They gave him his grave with the wicked and

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[1] Isa. liii. [2] Message, preaching, tidings.

[3] So in Heb. Text. Ewald proposes "us," which certainly suits the following clauses. [4] The sucker of a tree.

[5] Some render it "glory," or "majesty."

[6] According to some, "pains," but it also means sorrows. Exod. iii. 7. Lam. i. 12, 18. Ps. xxxii. 10; xxxviii. 18.

[7] Rendered sometimes, "sickness," but it also means "grief," lit. "knowing grief," or possibly "sickness." Delitzsch translates, "a man of pains and acquainted with sickness." So also Ewald, De Wette, Knobel.

[8] Or "sicknesses." [9] Lit., "hurled down, and trampled on."

[10] Punishment. [11] Which brought us peace.

[12] How impossible it is that the verse could be spoken of more than one person!

[13] The suffering, from God, he was enduring in the stead of the people.

with the rich at his death,[1] because he had done no wrong and there was no deceit in his mouth. 10 Yet it pleased Jehovah to smite him:[2] He put him to grief.[3] But though he gave His soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, and live long, and the will of Jehovah will prosper in his hand. 11 The travail of his soul (being over), he looks back (on his life and work) and is satisfied; by his knowledge shall My righteous Servant make many righteous, and he shall bear on himself the load of their iniquities.

12 Therefore will I give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoil with the strong,[4] for he poured out his soul to death, and let himself be numbered with the transgressors, whereas he had borne the sins of many and made intercession for the transgressors.

Another address to Israel, and especially to Jerusalem, or rather to the ideal Zion of the future, embracing the Church in all ages, follows. Read by the faithful among the Hebrew exiles in Egypt, and, far off, on the banks of the Chebar, such words must have promoted the religious enthusiasm that made the Return possible; for, even now, they fill the heart with devout emotion.

1 Sing aloud,[5] O (Zion, thou) barren One who didst not bear children,[6] (thy people being in exile); break forth into songs of joy, and cry aloud in thy gladness, thou that didst not bring forth! Far more are Thy children, though thou now liest desolate, than the children of the married woman, says Jehovah. 2 Widen the space of thy tents;[7] let them stretch out their coverings without stint; lengthen thy tent-ropes and make thy tent-pins strong.[8] 3 For thou shalt spread forth on the right hand and the left, and thy sons shall drive out the heathen,[9] and inhabit anew the (now) desolate cities.

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[1] Heb., deaths = martyr-death, pl. of honour.

[2] Lit., "to crush Him to pieces"—as straw, for instance, beneath the rough sledge.

[3] He laid grief—misery—on him.

[4] A great company. *Ewald.*

[5] Isa. liv.

[6] Isa. xlix. 21.

[7] Sing. in Heb.

[8] Lit., "break out."

[9] Lit., "nations."

4 Fear not, for thou shalt not be put to shame; be not cast down, for thou shalt not be a reproach; but wilt (instead), forget the shame of thy youth (in Egypt), and wilt not any more think of the reproach of thy childlessness,[1] (when thy sons were in Babylon). 5 For thy Maker is thy husband, Jehovah of Hosts is His name, and thy Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel—the God of the whole earth is His name. 6 For Jehovah hath called thee back again to Him (as a husband recalls the dejected and broken-spirited wife of His youth, once sent away in shame). 7 For a brief moment I cast thee out, but with great pity will I gather thee (back to thy land). 8 In vehement indignation I hid My face for a moment from thee, but with everlasting loving-kindness will I have pity on thee, says Jehovah, thy Redeemer. 9 For this (punishment of thine) is like the waters of Noah's flood with Me; as I swore that they should no more overflow the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be wroth with thee, or chasten thee (again). 10 For the mountains may move (from their place) and the hills be thrown (down), but My loving-kindness shall not remove from thee, nor My covenant of peace (towards thee) be broken, says Jehovah, that has pity upon thee.

Jerusalem, the centre of the new Kingdom of God, will be beyond measure glorious. The boldest style of Eastern imagery is used to bring before the mind the splendour of the New Theocracy about to be established. The capital, as its centre, is idealized in language which could never be literally applied to any city.

11 O Thou afflicted,[2] tempest tossed one, who hast had no comforter! Behold I will set off[3] thy (white) stones with glittering black[4] and garnish thy foundations with sapphires, 12 and I will make thy battlements of rubies, and thy gates of carbuncles,[5] and thy pinnacles of sparkling precious stones. 13 And all thy

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[1] Lit., "widowhood." [2] Isa. liv. 11. [3] Cement.

[4] Lit., "Antimony" with which Jewish women painted their eyelids. 2 Kings ix. 30. Jer. iv. 30. 1 Chron. xxix. 2. Job. xlii. 14, has a daughter called Kerenhappuch = "Horn of eye-paint."

[5] Stones of fiery splendour.

children will be disciples of Jehovah, and great shall be their peace. 14 Through righteousness shalt thou be securely established; thou shalt be (kept) far from dread of evil, for thou shalt not need to fear, and thou shalt have no thought of terror, for alarm shall not come near thee. 15 Behold, if strife be raised against thee, it will not be from Me; if an enemy gather in war against thee, he shall fall beneath thy walls.[1]

No one shall prevail against Zion, for Jehovah has all the agents of danger under His control.

16 Behold, I have created the armourer who blows the coals in the smithy and makes a weapon for war,[2] and I have created the destroyer to destroy. 17 No weapon formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise in accusation against thee, thou shalt prove guilty. This is the inheritance of the servants of Jehovah, and their righteousness given by Me, says Jehovah.

The apathy and moral insensibility of the exiles to the exhortations of the faithful prophets were well-nigh invincible. They listened, but gave no further heed. The attractions of Babylon, with its rich soil and commercial prosperity, outweighed, with all but a few, the inducements to return to the barren hills of Judah. Where they were they had the protection of a great empire, and opportunities on every hand for advancing their worldly interests; in Judea they would have to face poverty and danger. Hence they were as little disposed to go back to Palestine as the rich Jews of Europe or America are at this moment. Yet no supineness on the part of their hearers could damp the ardour of the prophets. Sent by Jehovah to preach the Return, they exhausted every form of address to make it popular with their fellow exiles. But the appeal, which next comes before

[1] Lit. "he shall fall to thee" = "shall be broken against thee."
[2] Lit., "for its work."

us, reaches, beyond the immediate national crisis, to the infinitely more glorious days of the Messiah. Jehovah Himself is introduced as urging them to seek the blessings He offers, rather than the material good afforded by Babylon, which, after all, did not satisfy the deeper craving of their hearts.

1 Ho,[1] every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; ye that have no money, come, buy and eat! yea, come, buy wine and milk[2] without money and without price! 2 Why spend[3] money for what is not bread, and your earnings for that which does not satisfy? Hearken! hearken! to Me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. 3 Incline your ear and come unto Me; hear and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the neverfailing mercies[4] promised to David.[5] 4 Behold, I have appointed him[6] a witness to the nations—a ruler and commander to the nations. 5 Behold, thou (O Messiah-Prince) shalt call a people that thou dost not know, and a nation which thou hast not known, shall run to thee, on account of Jehovah, thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel, because He has made thee glorious.

The prophet now turns to the perverse and stolidly obdurate among his countrymen, urging them to seek, while they might, an interest in the wondrous future of their race.

6 Seek ye Jehovah, while He may be found; call ye upon Him while He is near. 7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to Jehovah,

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[1] Isa. lv.

[2] Jerome, on this verse, tells us that it had led to the custom, in the Latin Churches, but not the African, of giving wine and milk to the newly-baptized.

[3] Lit., "weigh."

[4] Or, loving-kindnesses. Ps. lxxxix. 28.

[5] 2 Sam. vii. 12–16. The ideal Hebrew king seems to be taken as an anticipation, in a measure, of the greater David, the true Messiah.

[6] The Messiah.

and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. 8 For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says Jehovah. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.

The promises of man are not always trustworthy, but those of Jehovah are sure as the course of nature.

10 For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and return not thither, but moisten the earth, and make it bring forth and sprout, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, 11 so shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return to Me without result, but shall accomplish that which I please, and make that prosper for which I sent it.

The exiles will assuredly, notwithstanding all that is in the way of their liberation, go forth from Babylon, with joy.

12 For ye will go forth (from Babylon) with joy, and be led out in peace; the mountains and the hills will break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. 13 Instead of the thorn bush (of the desert) there will come up (on the line of march) the cypress, and instead of the prickly shrub of the wilderness there will spring up the myrtle tree, and they will remain for an everlasting name and sign of Jehovah's (great deeds), that will not pass away.

The superstitious and merely formal observance of the Sabbath, which had been censured by the prophet in his own day,[1] still prevailed in Babylon.[2] A few, however, kept the sacred day more worthily.

1 Thus says Jehovah:[3] Keep the Law and practise the right, for My salvation[4] is near at hand, and My righteousness is about

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[1] Isa. i. [2] Ezek. xx. 12, 13, 26; xli. 24. [3] Isa. lvi.

[4] The deliverance from Babylon. For "the right," or "righteousness," the Rabbis read "charity," making that virtue the equivalent of righteousness.

to be revealed. 2 Blessed is the man that does this, and the son of man who holds fast to it; who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds back his hand from doing any evil. 3 Let not the alien who has joined himself to Jehovah say, "Jehovah will assuredly separate me (as an alien) from His people," and let not the eunuch say, "Behold I am only a dry tree." 4 For thus says Jehovah to the eunuchs that keep My Sabbaths, and choose the things that please Me, and hold fast to My covenant, 5 I will give them, in My house and within My walls, a memorial[1] and a name, better than sons and daughters; yea, I will give them an everlasting name that will not perish. 6 As to the aliens who join themselves to Jehovah, to serve Him, and to love the name of Jehovah, becoming His servants; those of them who keep the Sabbath and do not pollute it, but hold fast to My covenant, 7 I will bring to My Holy Mountain, and make them joyful in My House of Prayer. Their whole burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted upon My altar, for My House will be called a House of Prayer for all nations. 8 The Lord Jehovah, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, says, I will gather others to him besides those gathered from his own tribes.[2]

The fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah throws a striking light on the private life of the Hebrew exiles in Babylon. Precise in their religious observances, they followed only too closely the characteristic of their forefathers in Palestine, in the contrast between their professions and practice. Jehovah, addressing the prophet, is the speaker.

1 Cry[3] with a full throat,[4] keep nothing back, lift up thy voice like a war trumpet, and proclaim to My people their transgression and to the House of Jacob their sins. 2 They inquire of Me,

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[1] Or "trophy;" lit., "hand." 2 Sam. xviii. 18. 1 Sam. xv. 12. Ezek. xxi. 24.

[2] The prophecy comprised in Isa. lvi. 9; lvii. 21, is translated in vol. v. pp. 51 ff.

[3] Isa. lviii.

[4] As when one blows a trumpet note.

indeed, daily, desiring to know My purposes,[1] like a people that practises righteousness and has not forsaken the law of its God. They (even) ask of Me judgments of righteousness (against their oppressors), and desire the approach of God (to set them free).

3 "Why do we fast," say they, "and Thou dost not take notice —why have we humbled our soul and Thou payest no regard to it?" Behold, (the reason is because) in the day of your fasting[2] ye follow keenly your business affairs, and press on all your worldly work.[3] 4 Behold, ye fast with strife and wrangling, and smite (your labourers) with the fist, in wickedness. Ye do not so fast on such a day as to make your voice to be heard on high. 5 Is this the kind of fast I love, the day when a man humbles his soul? Is (true fasting merely) to bow one's head like a bulrush, and to lie down in sackcloth and ashes? Wilt thou call that a fast, and a day acceptable to Jehovah?

6 Is not this (rather), the fast that I choose—to loose the fetters wrongfully put on (your poor brethren), to undo the ties of their yoke, and let the oppressed go free, to tear off, (in short), every yoke.[4] 7 Is it not to break thy bread to the hungry, and to bring the poor into thy house (to lodge and feed them); and that, when thou seest the naked, thou clothe him, and hide not thy face from thine own people?

8 (If thy fasts be like this), then thy light shall break forth like the morning, and thy prosperity[5] shall soon spring up; thy righteousness shall go before thee, (on thy way back to Palestine), and the glory of Jehovah shall guard thy rear. 9 Then thou shalt call and Jehovah will answer; thou shalt cry and He will say, "Here am I." If thou banish oppression from thy midst,

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[1] Lit., "ways," *i.e.* in respect to their deliverance and restoration.

[2] Fasts and humiliations were observed during the exile, in remembrance of the fall of Jerusalem and Judah. Zech. vii. 2 ff.; viii. 19.

[3] Or, oppress—drive on—all your workmen.

[4] Even in Babylon the richer Jews had enslaved the poorer, contrary to the Law. Debtors could be used as servants for six years, but must then be set free. Ex. xxi. 2. Lev. xxv. 39 ff. Deut. xv. 12 ff.

[5] Lit., "the healing of thy wound."

and the pointing of the finger (at the wretched, in contempt and derision), and fierce and contentious words;[1] if thou reach to the hungry the food in which thou thyself delightest, and satisfy the soul of the wretched; then shall thy light rise through the gloom (of thy present exile), and thy darkness will be like noonday, 11 and Jehovah will lead thee continually, and satisfy thy wants[2] in the thirsty desert, and fill thy bones with marrow, and thou shalt be like a well-watered garden,[3] like a spring of water, whose stream never fails.[4] 12 And thy sons shall rebuild the ruins of the past; thou shalt raise up again the foundations of former generations, and they will call thee "The Rebuilder of the ruins,"[5] "The Restorer of the inhabited streets."

13 If thou keep back thy foot from the Sabbath so that thou dost not follow thy business on My holy day, if thou call the Sabbath "a delight, the holy (day) of Jehovah, that is to be reverenced," and thyself honour it by not doing thine own work on it, or following thine own business, or speaking (vain) words, 14 then thou shalt delight thyself in Jehovah, and I will make thee march in, over the heights of the land, and feed thee with (the fruits of) the inheritance of Jacob, thy father; for the mouth of Jehovah has spoken it.

## The delay in the appearance of God on behalf of the exiles is on account of their sins.

1 Behold[6] the hand of Jehovah is not too short to deliver (you), nor is His ear dull so as not to hear, 2 but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, that He will not hear, 3 for your hands are foul with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips speak lies, your tongues murmur wickedness. 4 Every one accuses the other on unjust grounds; no one judges with honesty; they trust in words void of truth, they speak falsely, they brood over[7] mischief and bring forth iniquity. 5 They hatch adder's eggs, (so evil are their doings); they weave spider's webs, (so vain and idle are

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[1] See Isa. lviii. 4. Lit., "evil words."
[2] Lit., "soul."
[3] See illustration, vol. v. p. 304.
[4] Lit., "deceives."
[5] Lit., "gaps."
[6] Isa. lix.
[7] Lit., "conceive."

their schemes). He that eats one of their eggs, (who opposes their plans), will die, and if one of these eggs be trodden on, an adder comes out of it. 6 Their webs will not do for clothes, neither can men cover themselves with their works—(no use or good comes of them); their deeds are deeds of wickedness, violence is in their hands, 7 their feet run to evil and hasten to shed innocent blood; their thoughts of iniquity, desolation, and destruction, mark their paths. 8 They do not know the way of peace, and there is no uprightness in their course; they make their paths crooked for their own ends; whoever walks in them shall not know peace.

9 It is on this account that (God's) judgment (on our oppressors) is (still) far from us, and that (His) righteousness, (bringing deliverance), does not come to us; we wait for light, but behold darkness;[1] for the morning beams, but walk in thick night. 10 We grope along the wall like blind men, like men without eyes; we stumble (even) at noon, as if it were twilight; we are in thick darkness,[2] like dead men. 11 We all growl like bears, (in our groaning), and mourn like doves;[3] we wait for judgment, but it does not come; for deliverance, but it remains far from us.

12 For our transgressions are many before Thee, and our sins witness against us; our transgressions are before us;[4] our sins are known to us, 13 even our apostasy and denial of Jehovah, our departing away from our God, our hard and false speaking, inventing and uttering from the heart lying words. 14 Yea, justice is thrust back, and uprightness made to stand far off, for truth has stumbled in the market place, and justice is not allowed to enter (the place of judgment). 15 Truth, indeed, is left behind, (and is not to be found before our judges) and he who keeps himself from wrong doing is plundered.

Jehovah has seen all this and it has been evil in His eyes that there was no justice (among you, between man and man). 16 He has seen that there was no man (to stand up for the right)

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[1] Light and darkness = prosperity and adversity.

[2] Ewald and Delitzsch, by an emendation, read "among those full of life."

[3] The note of the turtle dove is always mournful. Heard in the gardens of Damascus it makes a low sound like a sigh, that is very plaintive.

[4] Lit., "with us."

and wondered that there was no one to come between (the wrong doer and the wronged), no one to stay the plague by interposing, (like Aaron), between the sound and the stricken. Since, therefore, there was no one who stood up for Jehovah, His own right arm brought deliverance to Him (from this state of things) and His own righteousness upheld Him. 17 And He put on righteousness as a coat of mail, and the helmet of victory on His head, and the clothing of vengeance for a dress, and clad Himself with zeal like a war cloak, 18 and He will requite them according to their deserts; wrath to His enemies, punishment to His foes; to the inhabitants of the western lands,[1] retribution. 19 And they will fear the name of Jehovah from the going down of the sun, and His majesty from its rising, for He will come like a flood that has been pent up, on which the breath of Jehovah blows.[2] 20 Thus will He come as a Redeemer to Zion, and to them in Jacob that have turned from their sins, says Jehovah.

Having thus redeemed His people, Jehovah will make an everlasting covenant with the true spiritual Israel.

21 And I—this is My covenant with them, says Jehovah: My Spirit that is upon thee, and My word which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of it, nor out of the mouth of thy children, nor out of that of thy children's children, saith Jehovah, from henceforth for ever.

The glory of the new Jerusalem, after the Return, is the subject of a magnificent ode, fitly appended to this rehearsal of the everlasting bond between Jehovah and His now righteous people. In the first stanza the prophet dwells on the return of the exiles.

1 Arise,[3] (Jerusalem), shine for joy, for thy light has come, and the glory of Jehovah has risen upon thee. 2 For, behold (though) darkness cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples,

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[1] Lit., "islands," or "coasts." Primarily, the nations of Asia Minor who resisted Cyrus, God's agent, but also all the heathen peoples who finally oppose Jehovah.

[2] See Isa. xxx. 27, 28.

[3] Isa. lx.

Jehovah will shine on thee (like the rising sun) and His glory will show itself upon thee; 3 and the (heathen) nations will journey to thy light, and kings to the splendour of thy brightness. 4 Lift up thine eyes, round about, and see; the nations all gather together and come to thee, and (with them) thy sons come from far, and thy daughters, borne on their side."[1]

## The heathen world will be converted to Jehovah, and offer gifts in His temple, now rebuilt at Jerusalem.

5 Then wilt thou look on and shine for joy, and thy heart will throb and swell for gladness, because the wealth of the western lands[2] will turn to thee, the riches of the heathen nations will come to thee. 6 Great caravans of camels will cover the spaces around thee — the young he-camels[3] of Midian and of Ephah,[4] (its related tribe); the whole people will come from Sheba,[5] bearing gold and incense, and raising songs of praise to Jehovah. 7 All the flocks of Kedar[6] will gather themselves to thee (for offerings

CHILDREN CARRIED ON THE "SIDE."

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[1] In the East children are carried on the mother's hip.

[2] Lit. "sea."

[3] Up to nine years old. The finest animals.

[4] They lived on the east of the gulf of Akabah, and conducted a great caravan trade. See Gen. xxv. 2, 4. *Winer, Realw.*, and others.

[5] Vol. i. p. 241.

[6] Vol. v. p. 144.

to God), the rams of Nebaioth [1] will be at thy service; they will be laid as well-pleasing sacrifices on My altar, and I will glorify the House of My glory. 8 Who are these that fly like clouds, and like doves to their dove-towers? [2] 9 Yes! the western lands [3] wait only for a sign from Me; the Tarshish ships [4] first; to bring thy (scattered) sons (O Jerusalem) from afar, their silver and their gold with them, to the name of Jehovah, thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because He has glorified thee.

The magnificence of the new Jerusalem will be resplendent. Gifts brought from every land will contribute to it, and the alien races around will be made to do the servile work, like the subjugated Canaanites formerly.

10 And the alien (races of the land) will build thy walls, and their kings will serve thee. For though I smote thee in My wrath, I will have pity on thee in My favour. 11 And thy gates will remain open continually (so great will be the concourse of nations through them, in and out); they shall not be shut day nor night, that the wealth of the heathen nations may be brought into thee; their kings themselves leading on the long trains. 12 For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; such nations shall be utterly destroyed.

All the wealth of the forest will help to beautify the new temple.

13 The glory of Lebanon will come to thee, the cypress, the plane tree, and the sherbin-cedar together, to beautify (Jerusalem) the place of My sanctuary, and to make the place of My feet (where I rest,—the Holy City) glorious. 14 And the sons of them that

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[1] The tribes south of the Dead Sea. Afterwards the Nabatheans, with a kingdom extending from the gulf of Akabah to the Hauran.

[2] Schenkel's *Bib. Lex.*, vol. v. p. 474. Dovecots like towers, with many small openings for the birds, are common in the East. *Land and Book*, p. 268. Neil's *Palestine*, p. 239. Knobel's *Jesaia*, p. 482. There are over 3,000 in Ispahan.

[3] Lit., "isles," "coasts." [4] Vol. iii. p. 351.

(once) afflicted thee will draw near thee, bending low; and all they that despised thee will cast themselves in the dust, at the soles of thy feet; and they will call thee "The City of Jehovah," "Zion of the Holy One of Israel."

The prosperity of the restored State will be wonderful.

15 Instead of being forsaken and hated, with no one passing through thee, I will make thee everlastingly glorious, a delight from generation to generation. 16 Thou shalt suck the milk of the nations, (enjoying their treasures); thou shalt also suck the breast of kings, (receiving their tribute), and thou shalt know that I, Jehovah, am thy Saviour, and that thy Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel. 17 Instead of copper I will bring (to thee) gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron, and I will make thy rulers Peace, and thy governors Righteousness. 18 Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction in thy borders, and thou shalt call thy walls Salvation and thy gates Praise. 19 The sun shall no more be thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light to thee; but Jehovah (Himself) shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. 20 Thy sun shall no more go down, nor shall thy moon withdraw itself; for Jehovah shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. 21 Thy people, also, shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever, (for they are) a shoot of My planting, the work of My hands, to show forth (in them) My glory. 22 The smallest (household) shall become a thousand, and the least (clan) shall become a great nation: I, Jehovah, will hasten it in its time.

The opening of the next section of the great prophet was destined, centuries later, to be read and applied to Himself by our Lord, in the synagogue at Nazareth.[1] Whatever, therefore, may have been its temporary and secondary references, there can be no doubt how the Divine "Servant of Jehovah" understood it.

1 The Spirit[2] of the Lord Jehovah is upon me, because He has

[1] Luke iv. 18. [2] Isa. lxi.

anointed me to preach good tidings to the wretched;[1] He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound (in fetters); 2 to proclaim the year of grace from Jehovah, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; 3 to grant favour to them that mourn in Zion, to set on them a crown, instead of the ashes (with which they had strewn their heads); to give them oil of joy (with which to anoint themselves), instead of raiment of mourning; a festal robe instead of a despairing heart—that men may call them terebinths (stately trees) of righteousness, which Jehovah has planted, to show forth His glory.

They will rebuild the long-ruined cities of Judah, and be served by the subject races of aliens around, they themselves being greatly exalted by God.

4 And they will rebuild the ruins of former days; they will restore the desolate places of the past; they will rebuild the towns now destroyed, the places laid waste in past generations. 5 And men of other races shall stand and feed your flocks, and aliens shall be your ploughmen and vinedressers. 6 But ye shall be called the "Priests of Jehovah"; men shall call you the "Servants of our God." Ye shall eat the riches of the heathen, and exult in the glory formerly theirs. 7 For your shame (in the past) you will receive double (honour and riches), and for the reproach (you have borne) you[2] will rejoice in the portion (given you); thus will you possess double—(the wealth of the soil and the wealth of the heathen); everlasting joy shall be yours.[3] 8 For I, Jehovah, love justice; I hate wicked robbery, and will give them their recompense faithfully, and make an everlasting covenant with them. 9 And their sons will be known among the nations, their offspring among the peoples; and all who see them will recognise them as a race which Jehovah has blessed.

The Servant of God now again appears, rejoicing in the promises thus given.

[1] The idea of bearing their affliction or wretchedness with humility and meekness is implied.

[2] Lit., "they."

[3] Lit., "theirs."

10 I will greatly rejoice in Jehovah, my soul will be joyful exceedingly in my God; for He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom puts on a priestly turban, and as a bride puts on her jewels. For as the earth shoots forth its green,[1] and as a garden buds out with all that is sown in it, so the Lord Jehovah will cause righteousness to shoot forth, and renown, in the eyes of all the nations.

The sixty-second chapter brings a continuation of these promises, and an assurance of their fulfilment. The speaker has been regarded by some as the prophet, by others as the Messiah, and by still others as Jehovah Himself.

For Zion's sake[2] I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, till her righteousness break forth like the morning light, and her salvation like a flaming torch.[3] And the (heathen) nations will see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory, and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of Jehovah will appoint; and thou shalt be a glorious crown in the hand of Jehovah, a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. 4 Men will no more call thee "Forsaken," neither shall thy land any more be called "Desolation"; but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, ("My delight is in her"), and thy land Beulah, ("Married"): for Jehovah delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. 5 For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.

Watchers stand on the ruined walls of Jerusalem, looking out for the approach of the exiles under the leadership of God, who will fulfil all His promises of rebuilding her in splendour.

6 I have set watchmen on thy (ruined) walls, O Jerusalem; they are never silent, night or day. Be not silent, O ye who

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[1] Lit., "sprouting." [2] Isa. lxii.
[3] See the verse before.

keep Jehovah in remembrance (of His promises); 7 give Him no rest, till He establish Jerusalem and make her famous in the earth.

There is no fear of God forgetting His word. On the contrary, He now repeats it in a new form.

8 Jehovah has sworn by His right hand, and by His mighty arm—Assuredly I will no more give thy corn for food to thine enemies, and aliens shall no more drink thy wine, for which thou hast toiled. 9 No; they that have harvested the corn shall eat it, and praise Jehovah; and they that have gathered the grapes will drink the wine in My holy courts.

Those who are supposed to be yet in Palestine are to hasten forth to meet the exiles, and prepare the way before them as they return.

10 Out, out through the gates; prepare a (smooth) road for the returning people; throw up, throw up a way; clear aside the (loose) stones;[1] lift up a standard (as a guiding beacon) for the tribes! 11 Behold, Jehovah has caused it to be proclaimed aloud, so that even the end of the earth has heard: "Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, Jehovah, thy Salvation, cometh; behold, His reward is with Him, and His recompense, (His restored people) before Him!" 12 And men shall call them "The Holy People," "The Redeemed of Jehovah"; and thou (Jerusalem) shalt be called "The Sought Out," "The City not Forsaken."

The first six verses of the sixty-third chapter form a distinct prophecy. Jehovah has executed fierce vengeance on Edom, and returns as victor from it. The passage, as Calvin remarks, is a declaration that God

[1] Just before one of the Russian grand dukes was expected, the road for forty miles, between Jerusalem and Nablûs—though generally in such a state as to make any by-path preferable—was made perfectly smooth and in good order throughout. The stones were gathered out, the broken-down embankments cast up, and shelving and slippery ledges of rock on the brinks of precipices, covered with a thin coating of earth.—Neil's *Palestine*, p. 104.

will interpose for His people, and defend them from all enemies. But Edom is often used as a symbol of the enemies of the kingdom of God at large.

Who is this[1] that comes from Edom, in bright-red garments[2] from Bozrah? This (Great One), splendid in His apparel, swaying to and fro[3] in the fulness of His strength? "It is I, who speak[4] in righteousness, mighty to save."

2 "Why art Thou red in Thine apparel, and why are Thy garments like his that treads in the winepress?"

3 "I have trodden the winepress alone; of the peoples there was none with Me, so I trode them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; and their blood[5] was sprinkled on My garments, and I have stained all My raiment. 4 For the day of vengeance was in My heart, and the year of My releasing (My exiles) was come. 5 And I looked and there was no helper, I was amazed, but no one came to My aid; and therefore My own arm was My help, and My fury supported Me. 6 And I stamped upon the people in My anger, and crushed them to pieces in My fury, and poured out[6] their blood on the earth."

From this fierce song of triumph we pass to the still waters of prayer and praise. Thanks, confession, and supplication mingle in a gentle stream which is in striking contrast to what has just preceded. The mighty deeds of Jehovah for His people call for songs of gratitude.

7 I will celebrate the lovingkindnesses of Jehovah, and His mighty deeds, according to all that He has shown towards us, and His great goodness towards the House of Israel, which He has shown them according to His mercy, and according to the

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[1] Isa. lxiii.

[2] Warriors had red clothing. Nah. ii. 4. *Cyrop.*, VI. iv. 1. *Val. Max.*, II. vi. 2. See vol. v. p. 119.

[3] "Tossing His head"—*Gesenius*; others, "bending to and fro."

[4] = Promise.

[5] Lit., "sap."

[6] Lit., "brought down."

multitude of His lovingkindnesses. 8 They are, indeed, said He, My people, sons that will not break their plighted troth, and (so) He became their Saviour.[1] 9 In all their troubles (in the wilderness) He also was troubled, and the Angel of His presence saved them;[2] in His love and His longsuffering He, Himself, delivered them, and He nursed and cherished them in His arms[3] all the days of old.

10 But they resisted, and grieved His Holy Spirit; so He turned to be their enemy, and fought against them.[4] 11 Then His people remembered the days of old—the days of Moses—saying, "Where is He who led them through the sea under the shepherds of His flock? Where is He who put within them His Holy Spirit? 12 He who caused His glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, dividing the waters before them,[5] to make Himself an everlasting name? 13 That led them through the floods (of the Jordan), as a horse on the (smooth) pasture-land, so that they did not stumble? 14 As the ox goes down (from the bare mountain) to the (fertile) valley, so the Spirit of Jehovah brought Israel to his place of rest;[6] so didst Thou guide Thy people, to make Thyself an everlasting name."

Israel now speaks, or, perhaps, the prophet in its name.

15 Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of Thy holiness and of Thy glory! Where are (now) Thy zeal and Thy deeds of might (shown thus gloriously in ancient days)? The yearning of Thy heart[7] and Thy mercies restrain themselves towards me, (in the long delay of deliverance from Babylon). 16 Thou art truly our Father, for Abraham (is long dead) and knows us not, and (so is) Israel, (our father Jacob), and does not

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[1] He saved them from Egypt.

[2] The pillar of fire and cloud in which Jehovah led them on.

[3] Lit., "bare and carried them." See Isa. xlvi. 3, 4. Exod. xix. 4. Num. xi. 12. Deut. i. 31. The full idea is that given above.

[4] Through Assyria and Babylon especially.

[5] Knobel refers this clause to cleaving waters out of the rock—but you cleave the rock, not the water.

[6] Canaan. [7] Lit., "sounding of thy bowels."

trouble himself about us.[1] Thou, O Jehovah, art our Father; "Our Redeemer" has from of old been Thy name. 17 Why, O Jehovah, dost Thou make us wander from Thy ways, and harden our heart so that we do not fear thee?[2] Return (to us), for the sake of Thy servants, the tribes which are Thine.[3] 18 Thy holy people[4] were in possession (of their land) only for a little while,[5] (and now) our adversaries have trodden down Thy sanctuary. 19 We have become as if Thou hadst not ruled over us from of old, as if we had never been called by Thy name!

The prophet prays that Jehovah would, at last, appear, to crush the oppressor, and deliver His people.

O[6] that Thou wouldst rend the heavens, that Thou wouldst come down; (O) that the mountains trembled before Thee; 2 (that they became) as broom[7] which the fire consumes, as water which fire causes to boil—to make known Thy (great) name to Thine adversaries, that the heathen may tremble at Thy presence,

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[1] Cheyne sees in these clauses a hint of some popular belief in the intercession of the saints of the race for their descendants. He quotes, "Rachel weeping for her children" (Jer. xxxi. 15). But this is surely a mere poetical figure of surpassing grandeur. So also the instance of Lazarus with Dives is only a part of a parable (Luke xvi. 22). In all ages there has been doubtless a hope that the holy dead might plead for the interests of their living friends, or descendants, or fellow-believers; but it seems dangerous, and hardly well-founded, to seek illustrations of this fond hope in the words of Scripture. Cheyne translates the present passage, "Abraham takes no notice of us, and Israel (Jacob) does not recognise us;" but this, we venture to think, is scarcely the most natural interpretation.

[2] For a moment it seems as if Jehovah, by His withdrawing from Israel, were leading it to evil. It is the world-old problem of the origin of evil. Their conduct must have been permitted, they say, by Jehovah; He could have prevented it, and it is the cause of their being chastened.

[3] Lit., "Thy inheritance."

[4] People separated by God for Himself. [5] Text doubtful.

[6] Isa. lxiv. [7] Or, brushwood or stubble.

3 when Thou doest terrible things (against them), for which we had not hoped. O that Thou wouldst come down, that the mountains trembled at Thy presence! 4 For, from of old, men have not heard, or perceived by the ear, or seen with the eye, a God beside Thee, who did such glorious things for him that trusted in Him. 5 Thou meetest him[1] who rejoices to do righteousness, who think of Thy ways. Behold, Thou art wroth, and we (confess that we) have sinned; we are now long in this plight; shall we (yet) be saved?[2] 6 We are all become as the unclean (heathen), and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted cloth, and we have altogether faded like a withered leaf, our iniquities sweep us off, as the wind (carries away the dry leaf). 7 No one calls upon Thy name, no one rouses himself to take hold of Thee, for Thou hast hidden thy face from us, and givest us up into the power[3] of our iniquities!

8 Yet, O Jehovah, Thou art our Father: we are the clay, and Thou our potter; we are, all, the work of Thy hand. 9 Be not wroth to the uttermost, O Jehovah, neither remember (our) iniquity for ever! Behold, consider, we beseech Thee, we are all Thy people! 10 Thy holy cities have become pastures for flocks, Zion has become grazing ground, Jerusalem a desert! 11 Our holy and glorious House, in which our fathers praised Thee, has become fuel for fire, and all that was our delight is laid waste. 12 Wilt Thou, in spite of all these things, keep Thyself back, O Jehovah, wilt Thou be silent, and give us up to the sorest affliction?

To this touching prayer, Jehovah vouchsafes an answer

1 I have listened to them[4] that did not enquire of me; I have been near at hand to them who did not seek Me. I said "Here I am," "Here I am," to a nation that did not call upon My name.

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[1] "O that thou wouldst meet." Ewald and Stier. But this seems opposed to what follows.

[2] A corrupt text. De Wette's rendering is, "Behold Thou wast wroth when we in foretimes sinned in Thy ways, but yet Thou didst save us." The sense in any case is only conjectural. I give the rendering of Delitzsch.

[3] "Hand." [4] Isa. lxv

2 I spread out My hands all the day to a rebellious people, which walked in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts; 3 a people who provoke Me to anger, continually, to My face; who sacrifice in the gardens,[1] and burn incense on (altars of) bricks;[2] who sit in the (rock) tombs, (to get revelations from demons and the dead),[3] and sleep through the night in secret places,[4] to (obtain dreams from the gods);[5] who eat the flesh of swine,[6] and broth of abominations is in their dishes (at their idol feasts); who say, "Stand by thyself," come not near me, for I am holy to thee[7] (and must not be approached by the "unclean"). These are smoke in my nose, an ever burning fire, (so glows and smokes My anger against them). 6 Behold, all this (their doing) is written before Me, (so that I cannot forget it). I will not keep silence till I have given them their due, given their due into their bosom.[8] 7 (I will requite) at the same time, says Jehovah, your iniquities, O ye exiles, and the iniquities of your fathers, who burned incense on the mountains and dishonoured Me upon the hills! Yes! I will measure out their due, first, into their bosom!

But though the obstinately ungodly will perish, a remnant of faithful ones will be saved.

8 Thus says Jehovah: As when the new wine is in the cluster, men say, "Do not destroy it, for a blessing is in it," so will I do

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[1] Isa. lvii. 5; i. 29.

[2] The top of the altars was of brick, contrary to the command, Exod. xx. 24, 25. See Isa. vi. 6. Ovid., *Fast.*, ii. 35. They are here contemptuously called "bricks."

[3] Isa. xiii. 21; xxxiv. 14.

[4] Perhaps in artificial or natural caves, where "mysteries" were celebrated. See Jerome, on the text, and also the Sept.

[5] Isa. lvii. 5. Chwolson, *Die Ssabaer*, vol. ii. p. 332.

[6] Forbidden by the Law (Isa. lxvi. 17; Lev. xi. 7), especially in a case like this, when the swine were offered in sacrifice. Sacrifices of swine were very common in antiquity. *Spenc. de legg. Hebræor. ritt.*, p. 137. Mover's *Phönizier*, vol. i. pp. 218 ff. *Pausan.*, VI. ii. 2. The Babylonians offered swine. *Chwolson.*

[7] Through heathen sacrifices and lustrations.

[8] See vol. v. p. 380.

for the sake of My servants, that I may not destroy them all. 9 I will lead forth from Jacob a seed, and from Judah possessors of (Canaan) My mountain, and My chosen ones shall inherit it, and My servants shall dwell in it. 10 And the plains of Sharon[1] (in the west) will be a pasture for sheep and goats, and the valley of Achor[2] (in the east) a grazing place for cattle, to the people who have sought Me.

11 But as for you, (among the exiles), who have forsaken (Me), Jehovah; that never think of My holy mountain, but set in order a feast-table to the (Baal) Gad—(the god of good fortune)[3] and fill up drink offerings to Meni,[4] the goddess of destiny: 12 I have appointed you to die by the sword; ye shall all bow yourselves to the slaughter; because I have called and ye have not answered, I have spoken and ye did not give ear, but did evil in My eyes, and chose that in which I had no pleasure. 13 Therefore, thus says the Lord Jehovah: Behold, My servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; behold, My servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty; behold, My servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed; 14 behold, My servants shall sing aloud for joy, but ye shall cry out for a broken heart, and wail for sadness of spirit. 15 And ye shall leave your name to My chosen, to be used as a curse by them,[5] for the Lord Jehovah will slay thee. But He will call His servants by another name, 16 so that he who invokes blessings on himself or the land will do so by the name of (Jehovah), the faithful God; because the old distresses will be forgotten (amidst the glory ye

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[1] The plains of Sharon (Sharon means a plain) extended inland from the coast, between Lydda and Carmel. Conder, *Handbook*, p. 309.

[2] The valley of Achor is the present Wady Kelt, formerly the north boundary of Judah. *Conder*, p. 258.

[3] The worship of Bel or Baal is elsewhere charged against the exiles. See Isa. lvii. 9. Feasts was part of the Babylonian worship. Bel and the Dragon 3. *Diod. Sic.*, ii. 9.

[4] Lenormant speaks of a Babylonian god called "great Manu." Gad may be the Hebrew equivalent of Guttav, the Babylonian name for Jupiter. Sayce, *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, vol. iii. pp. 170–1.

[5] As if they should say "May your fate be like that of so and so."

enjoy), and they shall be hidden from My eyes, (so that no repetition of them need be feared).

This glory of the restored Theocracy, including the Church in its spiritual completeness under the Messiah, will exceed all that language can describe.

17 For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth,[1] and the former (heaven and earth) will not be remembered or come into mind, 18 but ye will be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create. For, behold, I create Jerusalem anew, so that it will cause you to exult over it, and (I will make) her people a joy. 19 And I, Jehovah, Myself, will rejoice over Jerusalem and joy in My people, and the voice of weeping will be no more heard in her, nor the voice of sorrow. 20 There shall no more be carried out from her (the corpse of) an infant of days, or of an old man who has not filled his course; for he that dies at a hundred years old shall be regarded as a youth, and the sinner, (who was wont to be cut off early), shall be struck with the punishment of death when a hundred years old. 21 And they shall build houses and inhabit them, they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. 22 They shall not build and another inhabit, they shall not plant and another eat, for the days of My people shall be like the days of a tree, and My chosen ones shall long enjoy the works of their hands. 23 They will not toil for nothing, or bring forth children (to have them cut off by) sudden trouble, for they will be the seed of the blessed of Jehovah, and their offspring (will remain) with them. 24 And it will come to pass that before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. 25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust will be the food of the serpent. They shall not harm nor destroy in all My holy mountain (of Canaan), says Jehovah.[2]

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[1] Cheyne understands by this, that Nature itself will be regenerated. But when is this to be? Better, surely, understand the words as meaning that the defects and shame of the past will be done away, and a new state of things—holy and happy—introduced.

[2] Isa. xi. 6–9. Gen. iii. 14.

But the mass of the exiles, in spite of the preaching of the prophets, continued cold and indifferent to spiritual religion, joining heathen practices with the recognition of Jehovah; and while ready to rebuild a temple to Him at Jerusalem, if restored to their own land, remained strangers to true religion. The last chapter of Isaiah, therefore, opens with a passage recalling the language of other prophets and of some of the Psalms, in its depreciation of merely formal worship, and its demands for a broken heart and contrite spirit as the sacrifices most acceptable to God.[1] If Jehovah accepted a temple at their hands at all, they are to understand that it is not because He required it, or regarded it as an adequate honour, but only in accommodation to their weakness and human needs. Sacrifices offered by others than the contrite are worthless and even hateful to Him, though He accepts those presented by the truly worthy.[2]

1 Thus says Jehovah:[3] The heavens are My throne and the earth is My footstool.[4] What kind of house would ye build for Me? What manner of place for My rest? 2 For all these, (the heavens and the earth), has My hand made; thus they all rose into being, says Jehovah. But on this man will I look; on him who is humble and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word.

Sacrifices offered by the ungodly are an abomination, even when they are such as the Law prescribes.

3 He that slaughters an ox (I will not say "sacrifices"), if he be not My true worshipper, is hateful to Me as one that kills a man; he that sacrifices a sheep is no better than if he

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[1] Ps. li. 17. Isa. lvii. 15. Ps. xxxiv. 18. Ps. l. 8–15.

[2] Isa. chaps. lvi. and lx.; lxvi. 20. See also Jeremiah and Ezekiel *passim*.

[3] Isa. lxvi. [4] 1 Kings viii. 27. 2 Chron. vi. 18.

broke a dog's neck, (and offered Me the unclean beast;[1]) he that presents a meal offering is no better than if he offered Me swine's blood;[2] he that burns incense is no better than if he bowed to an idol. As they have chosen their own ways and their soul has delighted in their abominations, 4 so I will choose calamities[3] for them and bring their fears upon them, because I called and no one answered, I spoke and no one gave ear, but they did what was evil in My eyes, and chose that in which I had no pleasure.

Judgment will be let loose on these mockers. The prophet already hears, in spirit, the cry of their punishment, from the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem.

5 Hear the word of Jehovah, ye that tremble at His speech. Your brethren that hate you (the heathen and ungodly among the exiles), and that cast you out for My name's sake, (telling you to be gone to Palestine), have said (in contemptuous derision), "Let Jehovah glorify Himself, that we may see your joy!"

But they will be brought to shame, (for, lo I hear) 6 a sound of tumult[4] from the city (Jerusalem), a sound from the Temple, the sound of Jehovah, who renders their deserts to His enemies!

The return of the exiles, and the restoration of Jerusalem, will be effected with marvellous suddenness by Jehovah, and, as He has already promised, He will turn to the holy city the wealth of the heathen.

7 Before she (Jerusalem) travailed, she brought forth; before her pains came she was delivered of a man-child![5] 8 Who has heard anything like this? Who has seen anything like it? Were the whole people of a country ever brought forth in a day, or was a nation ever born at once?[6] But as soon as Zion travails, her children—the restored nation—will at once be born? 9 Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth, says Jehovah;

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[1] Eccles. ix. 4. [2] Lev. xi. 7.

[3] Lit., "freaks (of fortune)." [4] Lit., "crushing."

[5] Gesenius quotes an Arab proverb, "Sweeter than the birth of a boy." He says that the Arabs in old times used to bury female infants alive. *Jesaia*, vol. ii. p. 300.

[6] The sudden repeopling of Jerusalem looked like this.

shall I who bring to the birth, hinder its being completed, says thy God; (having done so much, will I not perfect My work?)

The prospect demands rejoicing from all among the exiles who love Jerusalem.

10 Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her; rejoice greatly with her, all ye that mourn for her (present desolation), 11 that ye may drink from the full breasts of her consolations and be satisfied; that ye may drink eagerly and delight yourselves from the dropping fulness of her glory.[1] 12 For thus says Jehovah, Behold, I will cause peace to stream[2] towards her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing flood, and then ye shall suck (the rich plenty of her bosom), ye shall be borne on the sides of the nations, like children,[3] and dandled on their knees. 13 As one[4] whom his mother comforteth (in need and pain), so will I comfort you; yes, in Jerusalem shall ye be comforted. 14 And when ye see (all your prosperity), your heart will rejoice, and your bones be vigorous as young grass, for the Hand of Jehovah will make itself known in His servants, but He will deal fiercely with His enemies.

Now follows the judgment to be thus executed.

15 For, behold, Jehovah will come in fire, with His chariots, like the rushing storm, to turn His anger in fury (on His enemies), and His chastisement in flames of fire. 16 For by fire and by sword will Jehovah hold judgment with all flesh, and those slain by Him will be many. 17 They that purify and consecrate themselves to enter the gardens (where idols are worshipped), observing the rites prescribed by their leader standing amidst them,[5] that eat swine's flesh and abominations—that is other

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[1] Knobel translates the clause, "and renew your youth from the increase of her glory." [2] Lit., "turn."

[3] Isa. lx. 4. Children are very often carried on the hips, sitting astride. See p. 355. [4] Lit., "a man."

[5] This is a paraphrase of a difficult clause. It seems most in keeping with the text. Some, however, think they walked after the image of some god or goddess. On the festival of Istar or of Tammuz, the figure of the god was borne in procession,

unclean creatures—and even the field-mouse,[1] shall be destroyed together, says Jehovah. 18 For I (will punish) their works and their thoughts; the time will come when I will gather all nations and tongues, and they shall assemble and see My glory. 19 And I will work (great judgments on My enemies), as a sign (of My power and majesty), and I will send those of them that escape, like messengers, to the heathen nations—to Tarshish,[2] Phut,[3] and Lud,[4] that draws the bow; to Tubal,[5] and Javan,[6] and the far off coasts and islands of the Western Sea, that have not heard of My great doings nor seen My glory—and they shall make known among the heathen My majesty. 20 And, as a gift to Jehovah, these heathen nations will bring all your brethren, (scattered among them), out of all the nations, on horses, and in chariots and litters, and on mules and dromedaries, to My holy mountain, to Jerusalem, says Jehovah, as the children of Israel used to bring the meal offering in a clean vessel to the House of Jehovah; 21 and I will take some of them, also, for priests and for Levites, says Jehovah.[7] 22 For as the new heaven and the new earth which I will make, shall remain for ever before Me, says Jehovah, so shall your seed and your name remain, (O Israel) 23 And it shall come to pass that from one new moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh will come to worship before Me (in Jerusalem), says Jehovah.

24 And (when they come thus) they will go forth (from the city) and look on the carcases of the men that rebelled against Me, for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be a horror to all flesh.

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adorned with jewels and robes of rich material, attended by her maids of honour, "Pleasure" and "Lust," and they went in procession to meet the mourners bearing the body of the dead Tammuz. St. Chad Boscawen, from a cuneiform record. *Academy*, vol. xiv. p. 91.

[1] The ancients fattened and ate this creature. It was unclean. Perhaps the jerboa is meant in the text. It is still eaten by the Arabs. Lev. xi. 29. [2] Vol. iii. p. 348. [3] Vol. i. p. 238.
[4] Vol. i. pp. 245, 261. [5] Vol. i. p. 233. [6] *Ibid.*

[7] He will not restrict Himself to the tribe of Levi or the sons of Aaron. Members of the returned "dispersion" will be taken for the holy offices.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### REDEMPTION DRAWING NIGH.

THE utterances of the prophets of the Exile bring vividly before us the condition of their brethren during the Captivity. Their treatment seems to have varied in different localities and at different times, but, at least in the earlier years, the iron of slavery entered deeply into their souls. They seem to have been settled in colonies here and there, over the land, working at all forms of bond service, but allowed free intercourse with each other, and retaining their distinct organization and customs, to a great extent, as in Judea. Continued restlessness and plotting, however, brought heavy punishment on their royal family and leading priests and nobles, in the beginning of the Exile.[1] Contempt and hatred, moreover, seem to have been lavished on a race so intractable, culminating not unfrequently in the dungeon, or even in death.[2] They are spoken of as often robbed and spoiled, snared in pits, and hidden in prisons.[3] Pitiless cruelty,[4] unrestrained by law,[5] crushed their spirits, till despair settled widely on the various communities.[6]

[1] Isa. xliii. 28; liii. 5. Jer. lii. 11.
[2] Isa. xiv. 3.
[3] Isa. xlii. 22.
[4] Isa. xlvii. 6.
[5] Isa. li. 13. Jer. l. 7–17. Pss. cxxiv. cxxix. cxxxvii.
[6] See the Prophets of the Exile, *passim*.

Gradually, however, matters improved. Many were allowed to live in the capital, where a happier lot was offered. Bitterness gradually subsided,[1] and they began to fall into their place as a recognised portion of the general community. They had, moreover, from the first, enjoyed the advantage of being collected in groups from the same localities in the fatherland. The exiles from Gibeon, Bethlehem, Anathoth, and many other places, found themselves among old neighbours and friends,[2] and the Babylonian authorities had even been considerate enough, to transfer each of the family groups and connections of the chief houses of Jerusalem, as a whole, to the same district, so that we find the descendants of David, of Joab, and other Judean patricians, living in free intercourse and close neighbourhood in Babylonia.[3] Even the poor Nethinim, the slaves owned by the Temple, and the public slaves known as "bond servants of Solomon," had been set down in communities of their own.[4] Still more, permission to hold land and vineyards, and to follow trade or gain, appears to have been granted after a time, and hence, at least in later years, many of the exiles possessed not only slaves, but horses, mules, camels,[5] and asses, though the mass had still, necessarily, to support themselves by humble labour.[6]

Growing contentment with Babylonia as a home, and the abatement of enthusiasm for Judea which time brought with it, must further, by degrees, have made life more pleasant for the exiles. The language of Babylonia,

[1] Ps. cvi. 46.
[2] See the list in Ezra ii. with the parallel in Neh. vii. 26.
[3] See the lists in Ezra and Nehemiah.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid. Isa. lviii. 3–6. Ezra ii. 65.
[6] Jos., *Ant.*, XVIII. ix. 1.

moreover, was so closely related to Hebrew, and its use was so easy, that it ultimately supplanted the latter, thus introducing once more among the descendants of their great ancestor Abraham, his long-disused dialect, and leaving that of Palestine, which had been for ages adopted in its place, to become obsolete. Ezekiel and Daniel show this change to have begun early; part of their writings being in Aramaic or "Chaldee." Still more, the ability and virtues, and even the beauty of not a few, from the first won notice for them in the highest quarters, as we see in the instances of Daniel and his companions, and, at a later period, in those of Nehemiah and Queen Esther.

The short reign of Evil Merodach, B.C. 561–559,[1] brought still brighter times to the exiles. Jehoiachin, who had lain in a dungeon for thirty-seven years, was at last set free, and seated at the table of the Great King, clothed in royal robes. Shut up at the age of eighteen, and now a man of fifty-five, we can scarcely doubt that his restored influence was exerted on behalf of his brethren, who, through all his sufferings, had loyally clung to him as their king. But two years later, the weak and effeminate son of Nebuchadnezzar was murdered by his brother-in-law, Neriglissar, who held the throne from B.C. 559 to B.C. 556, when he was succeeded by his son, a minor, who perished within nine months by a conspiracy of the nobles. One of these, Nabonidus,[2] as has already been said,[3] gained the vacant throne, and held it from B.C. 555 to the capture of Babylon by Cyrus in B.C. 538—a period of seventeen years. It was Belshazzar, the eldest son of this king, who was slain when the city was taken—his

[1] *Schrader.* 562–560, *Birch.* 561–560, *Volck* in new edition of *Herzog.* See, also, this vol. p. 288.

[2] Or Nabunahid.

[3] P. 289.

father having raised him to a share of the throne some time before.

The whole number of the exiles was by no means great. There had been about a million souls in Judah and Benjamin in the time of David—not including the Levites, and the increase in the four centuries since must have been large. But not more than perhaps 100,000 were carried off into captivity. Many had fled to Egypt, and numbers of the peasantry remained in the land, so that those taken to Babylon were at best only a feeble remnant.[1] Among them, however, were the noblest of the race, from whom, as from a root, the nation cut down so low, would one day spring up again. In them Judah had her last centre of organized public life. The flower of the princes, patricians, and priests of Judah, of its skilled mechanics and once substantial burgesses, had been transplanted to the Euphrates in numbers sufficient to secure in due time the regeneration of the State.

But the calamities of the nation wrought little moral improvement in the bulk of the exiles. Idolatry, to which they had long been accustomed in Palestine, flourished among them in Babylonia. The chief men treated their brethren with the same cruel harshness so often rebuked by the prophets in Judah; oppressing dependants, crushing the poor by extortion, perverting the law to their own benefit, and, finally, neglecting those whom their wickedness had reduced to misery. It seemed as

[1] Jos., *Ant.*, XI. iii. 10, has the strange error in the text of making those who returned to Palestine 4.628,000 persons from twelve years old, upwards. Cohen (*Les Pharisiens*, vol. i. p. 3), quotes this as the estimate by Josephus of the Jewish population in Babylon, but it is clearly a mistake of some copyist, as it refers to those who returned, and the right number is given elsewhere.

if all hope of a national restoration had perished; as if nothing remained of a people once so haughty, but the dry, unburied bones. But the very depth of the evils endured led to good. Some, as we have seen, learned in their wretchedness to seek the God of their fathers. Such, listened eagerly to the promises of the prophets that they would return to Palestine, and pondered the sacred writings. The priests of the line of Zadok, always untainted with idolatry, had brought with them from Judah the Books of the Law; the disciples of the prophets cherished the utterances of their order, handed down from past ages; the Levites jealously preserved the Psalms, composed from the time of David to their own day; the "wise" hung over the collections of sacred proverbs, and books like Job; the chroniclers retained some of the national historical records. Joel, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and other prophets, became, in their written oracles, the "wells of salvation" to the religiously disposed. The "songs of Zion" rose again on the banks of the Chebar, and in every Jewish colony in Babylonia. A more thoughtful earnestness spread daily. Men read in the inspired records multiplied proofs of the truth of their ancient faith.[1]

Meanwhile, the course of events strengthened the Jewish communities. More than a century before, the Ten Tribes had been carried off by Assyria; but on the destruction of Nineveh numbers of them had joined themselves to the exiles from Judah,[2] and thus increased the confidence of the godly in the restoration of the State, since this reunion was itself a fulfilment of prophecy. Deep penitence for the past, and determination

[1] Isa. xxxiv. 16.

[2] 1 Chron. ix. 3. Neh. vii. 34; xi. 4. Jer. l. 4, 20; li. 5.

to be true henceforth to Jehovah, increased.[1] The four calamitous days of their recent history—that of the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, in the tenth month; the day on which the city was taken, in the fourth month; the day of its final destruction in the fifth month; and that of the murder of Gedaliah, in the tenth month—were set apart as solemn fasts and times of lamentation.[2] A religious revival extended from the common people to some of the higher classes.[3] A habit of observing fixed hours for prayer became common. The time of the incense offering, morning and evening, had long been so sacred to devotion,[4] that the word "incense" became at last the equivalent of prayer.[5] Those "who feared Jehovah" accustomed themselves to meet often together for supplication and religious counsel;[6] usually, it would seem, as in later ages, by the sides of flowing streams, where water could easily be had for purifications.[7] The face, moreover, was always turned in prayer towards the site of the ruined Temple, as the spot where God had once been nearest to man.[8] Noon was added to morning and evening as a time for supplication.[9] Devotion, from these years, gained a prominence it had never enjoyed before. The house of prayer became a substitute for the Temple,[10] and not a few penitential Psalms seem to have been composed for its services.

While numbers of Jews from the Ten Tribes found

[1] Isa. lxvi. 2, 5. Ezra x. 3.
[2] Zech. vii. 1, 5, 19. Isa. lxi. 3; lxvi. 10. Ps. lxix. 11.
[3] Isa. lvi. 4.
[4] Ps. cxli. 2, 5, 3.
[5] Rev. viii. 3.
[6] Mal. iii. 16.
[7] 3 Macc. vii. 20. Jos., *Ant.*, XIV. x. 23. Acts xvi. 13.
[8] Dan. vi. 11. We see the practice already in 1 Kings viii. 48.
[9] Dan. vi. 11. See Ps. lv. 17.
[10] Isa. lvi. 7.

a rallying-point, after the fall of Assyria, among the exiles in Babylonia, the national sentiment was flattered, and loyalty to the ancient faith intensified, by the spectacle of many heathen proselytes accepting the Hebrew creed.[1] The perusal of copies of portions of the sacred writings can hardly have helped this, for the language in which the Jewish Scriptures were written was not familiar to many Babylonians. It must have been the result, in most cases, of the earnest efforts of the godly among the exiles, anxious to atone for their past indifference, by spreading the glory of Jehovah. The fact that not a few Jews, like Daniel, were in prominent positions, and the constant tendency to a closer intimacy in the affairs of ordinary life, doubtless aided this missionary enthusiasm. Moreover, the generation born in Babylonia must have felt much more kindly towards it and its people than their fathers had done. Some of them, indeed, even assumed Chaldean names, as in the case of Zerubbabel, who was also known as Sheshbazzar,[2] and that of Mordecai, which is a Babylonian, or possibly a Persian word. In such circumstances, the immeasurable superiority of the Jewish faith over idolatry could readily be urged on the more thoughtful of the heathen around. The poor especially, among these, if we may judge from the experience of early Christianity, supplied adherents to the true faith; the humbler Jews mixing freely with them, and winning their favourable regard. Once gained, these proselytes kept the Sabbath and honoured the Law, perhaps even to the length of submitting to circumcision;[3] and their adhesion reacted on the Jews themselves, kindling in them a still greater pride in their creed, and loyalty to it.

[1] Isa. lvi. 6. [2] Ezek. i. 8, 11, 14, 16. 1 Esd. ii. 12, 15.
[3] Isa. lvi. 6.

But if some Jews learned in exile to value their religion aright, too many became tainted by the heathen influences around them. Babylon was the London of its day, with a similar gigantic commerce and huge confluence of visitors from all lands, for business, pleasure, or religion. Immorality brought no shame. The very temples derived a large revenue from prostitution in their grounds. Harlots were, in fact, part of their recognised establishment, and it was even a law that every woman should offer herself at least once in this way, in the service of the gods. Naturally, the mass of the exiles caught the infection of so impure a worship. Babylonian idols were honoured in Jewish households, many of which further disregarded the Law by feasts on unclean creatures offered to these gods.[1] Jerusalem was forgotten, and the idea of a return to Palestine treated with scorn.[2] Large numbers became virtually Babylonians, and laughed at the fanaticism of their brethren who longed for Palestine. Vice and wickedness of all kinds flourished.[3] It was clear that the Return, when it came, would drain off most of the clear wine of the nation that remained, and leave behind it a vast body of lees.[4]

The prophet Hosea had foretold that Israel would need to be led once more into the wilderness, to quicken her again to fidelity to Jehovah, and exile beyond the Eastern desert had fulfilled the prediction. The wails of the Psalms and prophets of the time only expressed the inextinguishable sorrow of the better class of the banished.

[1] Isa. lxv. 3–11; lxvi. 17. [2] Isa. lxiv. 11. [3] Isa. lix. 7 ff.

[4] In the generations after the Return, there was a great revival among those Jews who remained in Babylonia. They became as zealous for the Law and the Temple as their brethren in Judah.

The sword, the dungeon, the lash; hunger, nakedness, scorn, as already noted, had marked the first days, at least, of the Exile. Of the multitude that left Judah, numbers had perished on the way.[1] To the survivors, life among the unclean must have been a perpetual agony, from the deadly peril at every moment of breaking the Law by heathen defilements. Even pulse was preferable to the dainties of the royal table under such circumstances.[2] The hundred and second Psalm, which dates from the closing years of the Exile, brings the times vividly before us. The weary servants of God, longing for the promised Return, poured forth, in its strains, the grief weighing on their hearts.

1 Hear my prayer,[3] O Jehovah: let my cry come before Thee.
2 Hide not Thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; in the day when I call, hear me speedily. 3 For my days vanish away like smoke: my bones are burned (with fever), like a glowing hearth. 4 My heart is withered and dried up like grass, till I have forgotten to eat my bread. 5 Through my loud groaning my bones cleave to my skin.[4] 6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness,[5] I am become like an owl amidst ruins, (so forlorn am I and desolate). 7 I pass the night sleepless, and, (while others sleep), I am like a lonely wakeful bird on the house-top. 8 My enemies speak contemptuously of me all the day long; they that rage against me make their oaths by me.[6] 9 For I have eaten ashes like bread,[7] and mingled my drink with weeping, 10 because of Thy indignation and Thy wrath; for Thou hast

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[1] Ezek. xxxiii. 27. [2] Ezek. iv. 12–15. Dan. i. 5–16.

[3] Ps. cii.

[4] Lit., "flesh." He was only skin and bones.

[5] Both unclean birds.

[6] *i.e.* "God make thee like him—forsaken and wretched." Isa. lxv. 15. Jer. xxix. 22.

[7] As a mourner he sat in ashes and strewed them on his head (Job ii. 8; Ezek. xxvii. 30), and thus his bread was mixed with them.

lifted me up (from my native land) and cast me forth. 11 My days are like a long stretched out shadow, (soon to be all darkness), and I am dried up like (withered) grass.

12 But Thou, O Jehovah, sittest throned for ever, and Thy glory is from generation to generation. 13 Thou shalt arise to have pity on Zion, for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come. 14 For thy servants love even her (ruined) stones and her very dust. 15 For the heathen shall (one day) fear the name of Jehovah, and all the kings of the earth (be awed at) Thy glory, O God, 16 when (it is said) "Jehovah hath rebuilt Zion, He has appeared in His glory; 17 He has regarded the prayer of the utterly wretched and not despised their supplication." 18 This will be written for the generation to come, and people yet to be created will praise Jehovah, 19 because He will look down from His holy height; Jehovah will look down from heaven, on the earth; 20 to hear the groans of the prisoner, to set loose those doomed to death; 21 that men may extol the name of Jehovah in Zion, and praise Him in Jerusalem, 22 when the nations and kingdoms gather together, to serve Jehovah.

23 He has bowed down the strength of my life; He has shortened my days. 24 My God, said I, take me not away in the midst of my days—Thou, whose years are from generation to generation! 25 Of old Thou hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. 26 They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; they all grow old like a garment; thou changest them like a vesture and they change, 27 but Thou remainest the same and Thy years have no end. 28 The children of Thy servants will have rest, and their descendants will continue before Thee.

The intense devotion to Jerusalem and Jehovah breathed in this Psalm, marks the change wrought in the better class of the exiles by the Captivity. It broke the charm idolatry had hitherto exercised. Henceforward, through all the future, they and their descendants were fierce monotheists. Their national shame and suffering were recognised as the punishment of the heathen practices of their fathers, and changed them for ever into worshippers of Jehovah alone, as the fires of Smithfield

made Englishmen Protestants.[1] The loathing and bitterness with which the prophets denounce image-worship became the feeling of the whole Jewish race. In the apocryphal Letter of Jeremiah, the idolatry of Babylon is painted, for the execration of all, in the most vivid detail. The gods of silver, gold, and wood, are described as seen in the great religious processions, borne on men's shoulders, their whole surface plated with gold and silver, golden crowns on their heads, and gorgeous robes around them.

"Yet," says the writer, "they cannot save themselves from rust and moths, though clad in purple; and men have to wipe the dust off their faces. They stand in their temples with sword and battle-axe in their hands, but they cannot defend themselves from violence or thieves. The doors need locks and bars to keep such gods safe; and though lamps are lit for them, they cannot see. Their faces are blackened with the smoke (of incense and lamps), and bats and swallows (that fly through the open temple), and cats (that creep through), sit on their bodies and heads."

The hideous impurity associated with the worship; the Levitical uncleanness of the worshippers; the unclean food set before the idols; the "roaring and shouting" of the priests, in their ministrations; their rent clothes and shaven heads and beards, are all detailed for contemptuous ridicule; even the dishonesty of the priests is noticed.[2]

Such was the attitude towards idolatry brought about finally and for ever by the Exile. But it had also the grand result of leading men to set increasing value on the spiritual services of religion, as contrasted with the merely ritual. Without prince, prophet, leader, burnt

[1] *Stanley*, vol. iii. p. 31.

[2] Baruch, chap. vi. *pass.* See also Bel and the Dragon, and the Song of the Three Children.

offering, sacrifice, oblation, incense, or place of sacrifice, men now hoped to be accepted, even without them, when they knelt with a contrite heart and a humble spirit before the Unseen God.[1]

How far the later theology and morality of Judaism were due to the studies and influences of the Exile is not easy to say, since the schools of Alexandria, after a time, largely coloured Hebrew thought. But it is certain that the Jew after the Captivity was a different man from his forefathers. The teaching of "Daniel" respecting angels, is an advance on what is previously revealed. We read for the first time of "Michael, the Prince of Israel," of "the Prince of Persia," and of the "Prince of Greece."[2] The earliest distinct announcement of the resurrection of the dead appears also in that book;[3] and in the mysterious Son of Man, who came to the Ancient of Days,[4] there seems to be a disclosure of the Divine personality of the expected Messiah—the "Word of God" of later Judaism, and the "Word made flesh" of St. John. The stress laid on the burial of the dead and on almsgiving in Tobit,[5] and in the Apocryphal literature generally, appears, also, to be a gleam of light from the days, when heaven brightened as the earth grew dark round the exiles. Nor is it possible to overlook the change from traditional exclusiveness, shown by the enthusiasm to bring aliens, by proselytism, into the communion of Israel. The closing chapters of Isaiah embody the wider sympathies of times when contact with the great world extended the views and enlarged the sympathies of the nation. The isles of the west, including the Mediterranean coasts, as far as Tarshish on the

[1] Song of the Three Children, ver. 14, 15.
[2] Dan. x. 13; xx. 21; xii. 1.
[3] Dan. xii. 2.
[4] Dan. vii. 13.
[5] Tobit iv. 3–20, etc.

Atlantic coast of Spain, and the countless races, as far east as China, the land of Sinim, are all eagerly expected to join with the Jew in a common worship on the Temple mountain.

It should not be forgotten, moreover, that the Exile was the period in which the guardianship, transcription, and study of the written Scriptures, became the special care of a distinct class, afterwards famous as the great order of the Scribes. Shut out from former privileges, and forced to hope in the future rather than look to the present, the earnest Jew concentrated on his sacred writings, the devotion hitherto felt for the Temple and its services. The writings of the prophets were collected, most of the Canonical Books joined with them, and the story of the past completed by the aid of ancient records. The Books of Kings, by the internal evidence of their last statements, date from this age of national depression, and we owe to it, probably, besides, the collection of the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and the recension of other portions of the Bible. God, in His Providence, had withdrawn His people for a time into scenes of humiliation and trouble, that, being thus purified, they might be brought back again to their own land zealous for His glory, bearing with them, for the benefit of all future ages, the rich treasure of His word, of which the discipline they had borne qualified them to be the watchful guardians.

The last twenty years before the release of the Hebrews from Babylon must have been a time of feverish excitement through all Western Asia, and especially among the Jewish exiles. When the mighty Nebuchadnezzar was just closing his career, a movement, destined to change the history of the world, had begun in the mountains beyond the southern Tigris. The leader under whom

this great political revolution was accomplished, was the Cyrus of Isaiah, originally king of Elam, but, ultimately, after he conquered Media, king of Persia also. He could trace his descent back to a member of the royal Persian clan, "Teispes," who seems to have ruled over Elam after the fall of Assyria;[1] his Persian dominions being handed over to his son, the great grandfather of Darius Hystaspes. Cyrus himself gives his titles, even in his later years, as the king of Babylon, Sumir, or Shinar, Accad, and Elam, only once mentioning Persia.[2] The Persian empire was founded by Darius Hystaspis, though the title of king of Persia is used by Ezra[3] of Cyrus, as that which he himself adopted in his later years.

Cyrus was the son of Cambyses, king of Elam, and, as is said, of Mandane, daughter of Astyages, king of the Medes, who was himself the son of King Cyaxares, whose daughter Nebuchadnezzar had married after the fall of Assyria.[4] Elam was at this time apparently a vassal of Media, paying it tribute; but Cyrus, in a war lasting from about B.C. 552 to B.C. 549, overthrew Astyages and made himself king of Media. Fortunate in securing an alliance with the king of Armenia, another vassal of Media, he was still more so in gaining over Harpagus, the general of the Median army sent against him. Following the example of their commander, the

[1] This appears to have been the conquest of Elam alluded to in Jerem. xlix. 34–39.

[2] Cylinder of Cyrus. Isaiah mentions only Elam and Media, not Persia, as invading Babylonia, chap. xxi. 1–10.

[3] Ezra i. 2.

[4] See vol. v. p. 271. Prof. Sayce questions the relation of Cyrus to Astyages. Smith's *Babylonia*, p. 172. But it is accepted by Dr. F. Justi, *Gesch. des alt. Persiens*. Pinches thinks the war against Media began later, about B.C. 552.

bulk of the troops joined the Elamites, who soon after defeated Astyages and took him prisoner.[1] The humiliated king ere long died, and Cyrus, having put the heir of Media to death, took Amytis, daughter of Astyages, wife of the murdered man,[2] into his harem, thus, virtually, assuming the crown.

Having entered on his career of conquest, the great Elamite carried his arms triumphantly from land to land, till the whole East, as far as the Himalayah, submitted to his rule. Then, having no more worlds to conquer in Further Asia, he turned his face towards its western lands.

The age in which he appeared was a memorable one in history. Among his contemporaries was Amasis, the successful soldier, who, after deposing Pharaoh Hophra,[3] took possession of his throne, and cultivated still closer relations with Greek mercenaries than had cost his predecessor both crown and life. The year B.C. 560 was marked by the accession of Cyrus to his father's throne, that of Pisistratus to supreme power in Athens, and that of Crœsus, son of Gyges, the ally of Pharaoh Hophra, to the throne of Lydia. Twelve years before, Tarquin the Proud had begun his reign at Rome. The West was entering on its great career as that of the East was closing. Hitherto, nations of Semitic blood had been foremost; henceforward, those of the Aryan stock were to take their place. Nor is it without significance that the Persians, who were hereafter destined to close the long era in which the centre of political power had been on the Euphrates, were themselves Aryans, and thus kindred in race with the Greek and the Roman.

[1] Inscription of Nabonidus. *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, vol. vii. p. 141.

[2] Thus brothers and sisters married in Elam, as in Persia and Egypt.

[3] See p. 206.

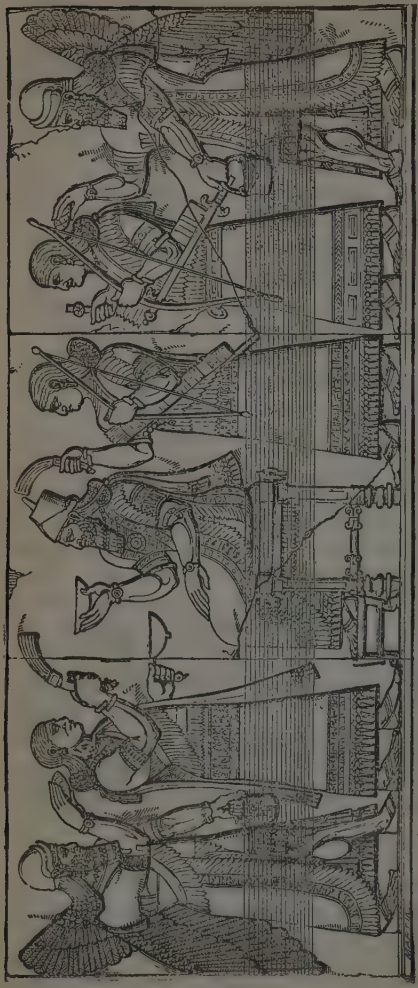
But they were to hold the sceptre of the world only for a few years, and then yield it for ever to the rising nations of Europe. Ancient history was closing and modern was near its dawn.

Crœsus, the son of Gyges, who had been the ally of Egypt against Babylon, continued his father's war on the Greek cities of Asia Minor, and greatly extended his power. But the fame of his immense wealth was enough, apart from his relations to Egypt, the hereditary enemy of the monarchs of Western Asia, to draw on him the attack of Cyrus, the new conqueror. Advancing from Armenia, the Elamite marched through subdued nations, to Asia Minor, and there Crœsus speedily fell before him. The standard of the conqueror, emblazoned with the figure of a flying eagle—the "ravening bird"[1] of the prophet, was thus supreme from the farthest East to the waters of the Egean.

Twenty years[2] passed in this vast succession of triumphs, but Babylon still rose above the wide inundation of victory. That it should do was intolerable to a boundless ambition. It, and not Ecbatana, the chief city of Media; or Sardis, the metropolis of Lydia; or Susa, the mountain stronghold of Susiana, was the political capital of Asia. That vast quadrangle of huge walls, with broad walks along their tops, and lofty towers rising high overhead, while a hundred gates of bronze pierced their circuit far below, was a province rather than a metropolis. It enclosed within its bulwarks an aggregate of great cities and far-stretching suburbs, of wide parks, and gardens,

[1] Isa. xli. 2; xlvi. 11. Xen., *Cyrop.*, vii. 1.

[2] If Mr. Pinches be correct, the time spent in subduing Media and the other countries was only about twelve years. He thinks the final subjugation of Media was in B.C. 550. *Trans. Soc. Bib Arch.*, vol. vii. p. 146.



THE GREAT KING ATTENDED BY HIS COURTIERS AND GENII.

and waving fields. The great commercial highways of Asia ran through it, and human industry had turned the desert round it into a richly watered Paradise, the most fruitful plain in the world. In its learned institutions was to be found the highest culture of the age; in its mansions and palaces, the accumulated wealth of plundered nations, and the refinements of the most consummate luxury. It was, moreover, the religious centre of Western

Asia, and the citadel of the great gods, before whom all nations had trembled. While they remained unconquered, they seemed invincible. Subject nations might invoke them to aid revolt from the new Power.

Ambition and interest thus combined to make an assault on the great city of the Euphrates only a question of time. Within twenty years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon, hemmed in on all sides by the conquests of Cyrus, was the only Power that still claimed independence. Its king Nabonidus, the third in succession from the conqueror of Jerusalem, had long foreseen his danger. It almost seems, indeed, from an inscription of the period, that at first he aided Cyrus against the Medes,[1] but in the last ten years of his reign he appears to have relapsed into careless inactivity, living ignobly in his palace in Tema, not far from Babylon,[2] while his army under Belshazzar, his eldest son, was finding a Capua in the luxurious idleness of Accad, or Northern Babylonia. The seclusion of the king, moreover, excited the discontent of the priests; for the images of the gods Nebo and Bel were absent with him, so that they could not be paraded in religious processions, to receive public homage. Neglecting to pay them this honour, Nabonidus contented himself with holding festivals and offering sacrifices for the preservation of the capital.

A contemporary inscription, lately discovered, gives a glimpse of Babylonian history in these years. Haran, it tells us, had been taken and destroyed by the Manda, or "barbarians," of Ecbatana, that is, by the Medes, and its temple of the "Moon," had been destroyed.

[1] *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, vol. vii. p. 145.

[2] Sayce calls it a suburb of Babylon. *Fresh Light*, p. 168.

"At the beginning of my long reign."[1] says Nabonidus, "Merodach, the great lord, and Sin, the moon-god, the illuminator of heaven and earth, the strong one of the Universe, revealed to me a dream. Merodach spoke to me thus, 'O Nabonidus, king of Babylon, go up with the horse of thy chariot; make bricks for the Temple of Rejoicing, and let the seat of Sin, the great lord, enter within it.' Reverently I spoke to Merodach, the lord of the gods; 'I will build this house, of which thou hast spoken. The barbarians (the Medes) went about it, and their forces were terrible.' Merodach answered me, 'The barbarians of whom thou hast spoken shall not exist, neither they, nor their lands, nor the kings, their allies.' In the third year (B.C. 549), when they (the barbarian Medes), caused Cyrus, the king of Elam, his (Merodach's) young servant, to march amongst his army, they provoked him to battle; the wide-spread barbarians he overthrew: he captured Astyages, king of the barbarians, and seized his treasures; to his own land he took them."

After this, Nabonidus was able to fulfil the promise he had made. Summoning his vast army, from Gaza on the west, and from the Persian Gulf on the south, he began the restoration of the temple at Haran, which had been built three hundred years before by Shalmaneser II., and afterwards repaired by Assur-banipal.

But the storm of war, which had desolated so many other lands, was now about to sweep over Babylon itself. A cylinder, inscribed by order of Cyrus, and discovered by Mr. Rassam, enables us to trace the progress of the catastrophe.

"In the ninth year of Nabonidus (B.C. 546)," it tells us,[2] "Cyrus, king of Persia, in the month Nisan (April), collected his soldiers and crossed the Tigris below Arbela,

[1] B.C. 552.

[2] Here Cyrus calls himself king of Persia. Professor Sayce is, therefore, wrong in saying that he is called so in Ezra only, "because the Persian empire was not founded by Darius till the time of the compiler of that book."

and the following month marched against the land of . . . . Its king took his silver and himself, and made his own children mount (the funeral pyre), and then both king and children were burnt in the midst of it."

Nabonidus, unmoved by the fate of this neighbouring land, still lived as secluded and inactive as ever. The year B.C. 545 was spent, like others, at Tema; Belshazzar, the heir apparent, being quartered with the army in Accad. "Until Nisan (our April) the king did not go to Babylon, neither did Nebo nor Bel. But they kept the festival (of these gods), and presented peace offerings in the temples of Saggil and Zida, for the preservation of Babylon and Borsippa." Meanwhile danger was closing round the empire, for "on the 21st Sivan (our June) the soldiers (of Elam) invaded Accad."

But six years were to pass before the final crisis. Cyrus had been unable to defeat the Babylonian army in Accad, and it barred the way to the great city. He, therefore, either betook himself to intrigue with the people on the "lower sea," or Persian Gulf, and probably with the Jews in Babylonia, or invaded the lower provinces and subdued them. At last, in B.C. 539, these districts rose against Nabonidus, who now trembled for his safety, and no longer absented himself from Babylon. Bel was brought out, after his long rest, and famous local gods, from far and near, were conveyed to the capital, that all, united, might be induced, by special public honours, to save the imperilled State. In the words of the inscription, "the gods of Marad—Zamama and the gods of Kis—Beltis and the gods of Kharsak-Kalama, the gods of Accad, above and below the sky, were brought to Babylon, but the gods of Borsippa, Cullah and Sippara, were not brought." All, however, was useless, and Cyrus marched steadily towards the

doomed city. His troops approached at the same time from both north and south, but as they advanced, the cause of Nabonidus was lost by the revolt of Accad. As a result of this, the city of Sippara (Sepharvaim) was taken "on the 14th of Tammuz" (July) without fighting, the king, who had been in it, fleeing to Babylon. But there also, the cylinder tells us, no resistance worth the name was offered, Gobryas, governor of Kurdistan (Gutium), the general of Cyrus, entering the city without a blow, two days after the fall of Sippara. Nabonidus, himself, who had apparently fled, was taken soon after and put into fetters at Babylon. A few bolder spirits kept the gates of one of the temples closed till the end of the month; but they had no weapons, and at last surrendered without fighting.

The public entry of Cyrus into Babylon took place on the 3rd of Marchesvan (October), immense crowds filling the roads and streets as he advanced. True to his policy of moderation, he forthwith granted an amnesty, and proclaimed peace to both the city and province. Gobryas, the commander-in-chief of the army, was rewarded by being made governor-in-chief of the city, and the people in the provinces were propitiated by the restoration to their local shrines of the images brought by Nabonidus to the capital—a measure which was not completed till the month of Adar (February). In that month Nabonidus died, and a public mourning for him, till the third of Nisan, was ordered throughout Accad. A grand funeral, arranged by Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, closed the story of the unfortunate monarch, who was buried in the temple of the Sceptre of the World, the priests of the temple performing high obsequies. To this point the inscription recording these details is legible, but, unfortunately, the remaining text is im-

perfect, though enough remains intelligible to show that it recounts the honours paid by Cyrus and his son to the gods of Babylonia, their offering sacrifices to Bel, and their replacing Nebo in his former shrine.

Happily a third inscription—that on the "cylinder of Cyrus"— supplements the narrative thus far recovered. In it Cyrus relates that the gods were angry with Nabonidus for his neglect of their worship.

"The gods dwelling within their shrines left them in anger when Nabonidus brought them to Babylon. Merodach went about to all men, wherever their seats, and the men of Sumir and Accad (Lower and Upper Babylonia), whom he had sworn should attend him, (besought him to return). This favour he granted, and came back. All lands, even the whole of them, rejoiced and ate. And he appointed a king to guide aright in the heart what his hand upholds [1]; Cyrus, king of Elam, he proclaimed by name sovereign; all men everywhere dwell on his name. The men of Kurdistan and all the barbarians (of Ecbatana—the Medes) he made bow down to his feet, the men of the black-headed race (the Accadians), whom he had conquered with his hand, he governed in justice and righteousness. Merodach, the great lord, the restorer of his people, beheld with joy the deeds of his vicegerent, who was righteous in hand and heart. To his city of Babylon he summoned his march, and bade him take the road to Babylon, going at his side like a friend and comrade. The weapons of his vast army, whose numbers, like the waters of a river, could not be known, he marshalled at his side. Without fighting or battle he caused him to enter Babylon. His (Merodach's) city of Babylon feared. In a place difficult of access he gave into his (Cyrus's) hand, Nabonidus, the king, who did not worship him. The men of Babylon, all of them, and the whole of Sumir and Accad, the nobles and priests who had revolted, kissed his feet (Cyrus's); they rejoiced in his rule; their faces shone. The god who raises the dead to life, who helps all men in trouble and prayer, has, in goodness, drawn nigh to him (Cyrus), and has made

[1] Compare Isaiah.

his name strong. I am Cyrus, the king of legions, the great king, the powerful king, the king of Babylon, the king of Sumir and Accad, the king of the four zones, the son of Cambyses the great king, the king of Elam; the great grandson of Teispes, the great king, the king of Elam; of the ancient seed-royal, whose rule has been beloved by Bel and Nebo, whose sovereignty they cherished, according to the goodness of their hearts. At that time I entered Babylon in peace, I enlarged the seat of my dominion with joy and gladness in the palace of the kings. Merodach, the great lord (cheered) the heart of his servant, whom the sons of Babylon (obeyed, each) year and day. . . . My vast armies he marshalled peacefully in the midst of Babylon; throughout Sumir and Accad no one reviled me. The temples of Babylon and all its fortresses I established in peace. As for the sons of Babylon. . . . their ruins I repaired, and I delivered their prisoners. I prepared for the work (of restoring the shrine) of Merodach, the great lord, and he graciously drew nigh unto me, Cyrus the king, his worshipper, and to Cambyses my son, the offspring of my heart, and to all my army, and in peace we duly restored its front (that of the shrine) in glory.

"All the kings who dwell in the high places of all regions, from the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea, who dwell in (the high places) of the kings of Phenicia and Sutar, all of them brought their rich tribute and kissed my feet in the midst of Babylon. From (the city of) . . . to the gates of Assur and Istar. . . . Accad, Marad, Zamban, Me-Turnat, and Duran, as far as the borders of Kurdistan; the gods whose seats were in the fortresses upon the Tigris, I restored to their seats, and I built for them shrines that would last long. All these peoples I assembled and I restored their lands. And the gods of Sumir and Accad, whom Nabonidus, to the anger of the lord of gods (Merodach) had brought to Babylon, I settled in peace in their sanctuaries, by command of Merodach, the great lord. In the goodness of their hearts may all the gods whom I have brought back to their strong places intercede before Bel and Nebo, that they may grant me length of days; may they bless my schemes with success, and may they say to Merodach, my lord, that Cyrus the king, thy worshipper, and Cambyses his son, (deserve his favour)."

Such is the notice of the fall of Babylon, preserved in

contemporary inscriptions.[1] The narrative of Herodotus, which, if it be actually historical, is thus proved[2] to refer to the capture of the city in B.C. 518, by Darius Hystaspis, informs us that Cyrus, hopeless of taking the city by a regular siege, lowered the waters of the Euphrates which flowed through Babylon, by digging canals, and thus diverting them from their ordinary bed, so that his forces were able to enter freely; the Babylonians, in their panic, having forgotten to close the inner gates which might have saved them.

The brief statement of the Book of Daniel[3] helps us to fill up the picture of the eventful night in which the mistress of the world was thus surprised and taken. Belshazzar, the eldest son of Nabonidus, associated with him on the throne, and commander-in-chief of the army, had retreated to Babylon after his defeat in Accad, and fancied himself safe within its mighty walls, notwithstanding the recent disasters. Any lingering fear sought to drown itself in the wild revelry of a sacrificial feast to the gods. A thousand nobles sat down to the banquet; the king himself, with a dazzling array of princes and princesses, and the beauties of the harem, attending in high state. High-born ladies were wont to be present at such orgies in Babylon, and rivalled the coarser sex in their shamelessness and excess.[4] The feast, as described in Daniel, brings before us a scene of luxury and splendour only to be found in the greatest of Oriental courts; the magnificent hall, with its sculptured and painted walls and its costly ceiling, the strains of sweet music from

[1] *Journal of R. Asiatic Soc.*, vol. xii. pp. 80 ff. *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, vol. vii. pp. 139–176. Sayce, *Fresh Light*, pp. 170–174.

[2] *Herod.*, i. 191. [3] Dan. v.

[4] *Curtius*, v. 1, says, that at feasts, the ladies—"matrons and virgins"—became dead to shame as the revelry advanced.

antechambers, the air rich with costly perfumes, the tables laden with gold and silver vessels of every size and shape, plundered from half a world; the gorgeous uniforms and robes of the guests, and the blaze of jewels, made up a display such as could only be witnessed in the foremost city of the earth. As if to deride the hopes of the Jews in their approaching deliverance, the rich vessels of gold and silver carried off by Nebuchadnezzar, two generations before, from the Temple at Jerusalem, and since then stored in the treasury of the temple of Bel, were set forth, as part of the boundless wealth of the Great King. Amidst this wilderness of splendour stood countless golden vases filled with the richest wines of Helbon and Lebanon, and from these, as if in defiance of Jehovah, the sacred vessels of the Temple were filled, that the guests might drink to the health of the gods which Babylon worshipped.[1]

But the Keeper of Israel, who neither slumbers nor sleeps, was at hand to avenge Himself for the insult. In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, over against one of the many-branched lamps which filled the hall with light, and wrote on the smooth stucco of the wall. The revelry was hushed at once, and all faces grew pale. The enchanters, magi, and astrologers, were summoned in hot haste. A purple robe of honour and the golden collar of "third ruler" of the kingdom, next to Belshazzar himself, the second, were promised as his reward who should interpret the mysterious symbols. But no one could read them. Then the queen mother, perhaps Nitocris, the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar,[2] remembering how Daniel, now an old man, had solved the dreams of her father, long years before, hinted that he, perhaps, could read the awful characters. And now, the

[1] Dan. v. 4. Bar. vi. 4. [2] *Herod.*, i. 185.

hoary prophet, emerging for a moment, by command, from long seclusion, once more vindicates the Eternal, in whose name he speaks. "The words," which were Aramaic, "mean," cries the seer, "'numbering,' 'weighing,' and 'breaking,' and tell, from above, that God has numbered thy kingdom, O king, and finished it; that thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting; and that thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."[1] True to history, the sacred chronicle mentions the Medes first, and next the Persians, not the Elamites—Cyrus himself, as we have seen on his cylinder, having latterly assumed this style, though the Medes, as the older nation, are flattered by having the first place assigned them, Persian authority not being as yet indisputably supreme.

"In that night was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, slain." Chariot and horse and footman had entered the city by the help of traitors within. The hundred two-leaved gates of bronze,[2] the mighty walls, and the glittering legions, on which the Great King so proudly relied, had been useless to stay the invader. In the panic of sudden and awful surprise, the guards fled from the inner gates, leading from the river banks to the city, leaving them open. The predictions of the prophets were literally fulfilled. Babylon had "suddenly fallen." Its mighty men, palsied with fear, made no resistance while the fierce mountaineers of Media and Elam marched through the silent streets. In so vast a place, the conquerors had triumphed at one end before news of the attack reached the other; but running footmen speedily carried the terrible story to the king. All was lost; every way of escape stopped, the great public buildings in flames, and the soldiery too

[1] Dan. v. 26–28. [2] Isa. xlv. 1, 2. *Herod.*, i. 129.

demoralized to fight.[1] The foe, swarming like locusts, knew no pity, but slaughtered the unresisting population like sheep.[2] Bel bowed down, Nebo stooped, unable to protect their votaries.[3] Belshazzar himself perished amidst the flower of his court, perhaps in a vain attempt at resistance. Babylon, the terror of the earth, the oppressor of nations, was humbled at last. The shock of her fall was felt by all lands. The sacking of London by a sudden surprise, and the subversion of the British empire, would be the only parallel event in our own day.

The transition from the Chaldean dynasty to the rule of the conquerors followed at once, for resistance appears to have ceased after the taking of Babylon. Cyrus was now supreme over all Asia, from India to the Dardanelles; but, though the moving spirit of this vast revolution, the obscurity of his original position as king only of Elam, and his relations to the Medes, and perhaps the Persians, seem to have led him for the time to deny himself the titular sovereignty. A Median prince appears, therefore, to have been put forward by him as the nominal king, though the real power remained in his own hands. Elam and Persia had been hitherto very inferior in power and rank to Media, the haughty clans of which followed him rather as their adopted chief than as their conqueror; and the time was not yet ripe for affronting this proud assumption of independence. Cyrus had gained the leadership by affecting to liberate Media from a tyrannical despot, and the support of the aristocracy and army had been won only by this diplomacy. A Median prince was therefore established for the time as king in Babylon—Darius, the son of Ahasuerus or Cyaxares, a childless and easily-managed man of sixty-two. Two years later this phantom king died, and no

[1] Jer. li. 8, 30, 31. [2] Jer. li. 40. [3] Isa. xlvi. 1.

further opposition to the accession of Cyrus, as an Elamite, being possible, he openly assumed the empire.[1]

The nominal reign of Darius extended from B.C. 538 to B.C. 536, but has left no recorded incident except that of the deliverance of the prophet Daniel from the den of lions. The new empire had been divided into 120 provinces, each under its own governor, with three Sarekin,[2] or presidents, at their head, of whom Daniel was one.[3] That he should have been thus honoured was natural, from his services to the great Nebuchadnezzar, and the impressiveness of his recent appearance at the last feast of Belshazzar. But the elevation of a Jew who slighted the local gods, roused the jealousy of the native aristocracy, and led to a plot for the destruction of the prophet, who was now at least eighty years old; having been carried to Babylon as a youth in the year B.C. 606.

The story of the den of lions is strictly in keeping with Babylonian usages. Assurbanipal says in his annals, "The rest of the people I threw alive into the

[1] The identification of Darius mentioned in Dan. v. 31, etc., has given rise to much controversy. That there should be difficulty about a merely titular king, when Cyrus was the actual ruler, is natural. Various explanations have been given, but the one in the text seems the most satisfactory. For a full discussion of the subject, see *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, vol. vi. pp. 1–133. *Speaker's Com., Daniel*, pp. 305–313. Boscawen thinks Darius is only a title = the king. So does Ernest Bunsen. Vigouroux adds the idea that "Ugbaru," who is named in an inscription by Cyrus, is the same as Darius (vol. iv. p. 483). Lenormant advances, in connection with the appointment of this personage, a proof that Cyrus had not royal power at once, in the fact that in the first and second years he is only called "king of nations," and not till the third year "king of Babylon."—*La Divination*, pp. 181–2. *Babylon*, in *Annales de Philos. Chrétienne*, 1881, p. 680.

[2] Apparently an Assyrian word. [3] Not "first."

midst of the bulls and lions, as Sennacherib my grandfather used to do."[1] Lions abounded round the great city, and the Great King is frequently portrayed in the sculptures as engaged in their pursuit.[2] It is probable, moreover, that numbers of captive lions were kept in the preserves attached to the palaces, to be turned out for the chase when the king wished.[3]

His religious fidelity was the only point on which Daniel could be assailed. From the earliest ages the kings of Babylon had claimed to be Divine,[4] and it was

The Great King Hunting the Lion.

therefore easy to procure an order from Darius to require all "petitions" to be made for thirty days, only to himself. To obey such a decree was impossible to one like the prophet. His conduct when it was signed and thus irreversible, was in keeping with his past character, and has ever since presented an ideal of duty, when a choice is demanded between obedience to God or to man. "He went into his house, and his windows in his chamber (on

[1] *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, vol. ii. p. 362.
[2] See Hommel's *Zwei Jagdinschriften Assurbanipal's*, p. 2.
[3] Layard, *Nineveh and Babylon*, vol. xxiv. pp. 136, 271, 288.
[4] *Records of the Past*, vol. i. p. 8. Oppert, *Inscriptions*, p. 16.

the roof) being open towards Jerusalem (for prayer), he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." What followed is known to us all. Delivered from the lions, Daniel "prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian," whom he may have been largely instrumental in moving to send back the Hebrews to Palestine.

The seventy years of the Captivity,[1] dating from B.C. 606—the fourth year of Jehoiakim, when Daniel and many others were carried off to Babylon—to the accession of Cyrus as sole king, in B.C. 536, had now expired, and the sure word of prophecy could not fail. Other influences, besides that of Daniel, tended to its fulfilment. The very fact that the king's name stood written in Jewish predictions uttered long before,[2] as that of the deliverer of the nation, could hardly have failed to impress him. Josephus, indeed, expressly ascribes to this the favourable action taken.[3] But, in addition, the interests of the exiles may have been advanced by Jews in the court service,[4] and by Babylonian proselytes of high standing. Nor were motives of human policy wanting. It would necessarily help the empire if a friendly people were established, under its protection, between its territories and Egypt, the hereditary rival for dominion over Western Asia.

The decree which fulfilled the announcements of prophecy, is reproduced in the first chapter of Ezra.[5] It not only permits the Jews, in every part of the empire, to "go up to Jerusalem" to rebuild the Temple of Jehovah, but invites help for them, in silver, gold, goods, and beasts.

[1] Jer. xxv. 11; xxix. 10. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21.
[2] Isa. xli. 25 ff.; xliv. 28; xlv. 1 ff.
[3] Jos., *Ant.*, XI. i. 1. [4] Dan. i. 6. [5] Ezra i. 2–4.

The similarity of its style and language to those of other Persian proclamations is striking. Thus, for example, that of Darius Hystaspis, in the inscription at Elvend, requires only the substitution of Jehovah for Ormuzd, to be almost identical with the words of Cyrus. "The great god Ormuzd," says he, "the greatest of gods, who created the earth and the heavens and men, and gave power to men, and made Darius king."[1] Nearly the same language occurs in the inscription of the same monarch at Persepolis.[2] It was natural, therefore, for Cyrus to introduce the name of a god, as he does in his decree, though his mention of Jehovah, as shown in his own inscriptions already given, was only that of a polytheist, willing to honour the national god of any people, if occasion demanded. Neither he nor Darius Hystaspis, indeed, was ever a monotheist, though both have always been thus regarded. Policy dictated the fullest toleration of all the religions of the empire. "Ormuzd, the god of the Aryans," says Darius, at the close of his life, "was my

DARIUS RECEIVING PRISONERS. *Relief of the Mountain Inscription of Behistun.*

[1] Ménant, *Exposé des Eléments de la gram. Assyrienne.* Paris, p. 302. *Records of the Past*, vol. ix. p. 78.

[2] *Records of the Past*, vol. ix. p. 74.

supporter, *and the other gods,* because I have not been wicked. I have not been a liar nor a criminal, neither I nor my family. I have committed no violence to the just or the good. The man who was loyal to my house I heartily protected; him who sinned, I slew. I never did violence to a brave warrior."[1] In the same spirit, we have seen Cyrus recording that he repaired the shrine of "Merodach, his lord," and restored to their places the gods who dwelt among various peoples enumerated, and that he prays to Merodach, as his worshipper, for himself and his son.[2]

He was thus precisely the man to show favour to the servants of Jehovah, the Jewish god, since he made it a point to support all religions in turn, that he might win the loyalty of their respective adherents. While, therefore, he honoured the god of the Hebrews in high sounding phrases, we cannot claim him as more than a shrewd politican, using language which served a temporary end and might perhaps gain him the help of one god the more. But whatever his secret thoughts, he had fulfilled the decree of Providence, and opened the gates of Babylon to the exiles, that they might return freely to their own land, and restore the long-fallen kingdom of God.

[1] Oppert, *Le peuple et la langue des Mèdes,* p. 151. Yet Darius was severe enough when he chose. He tells us that he cut off the nose and ears of a pretender to the crown, and dug out his eyes; after which he kept him chained in public for all the people to see, and finally crucified him. *Oppert,* p. 133. Sayce speaks of Darius being a Zoroastrian monotheist (*Fresh Light,* p. 176), but the inscription quoted above, shows this to be an error.

[2] P. 349.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE RETURN.

THE glowing words of the prophets respecting Cyrus had kindled a fervent loyalty to him in the breasts of the exiles. He had been proclaimed the "Shepherd" of Jehovah, His "anointed, whom Jehovah had called from the East" to free His chosen people and rebuild His temple. Fortunately, the Phenicians were also devoted admirers of the great king. They stood between him and Egypt on the north of Palestine; the Jews would do a similar service on the south. Policy dictated special favour under such circumstances. Hence they were not only permitted to take all their private property with them; their brethren and others were encouraged to help them in their great undertaking. The joy at the national deliverance was unbounded. Even the imagery of the prophets seemed inadequate to express it. Men could now, once more, say among the heathen that Jehovah reigned.[1]

When Jehovah led back the captives of Zion, sang one of the sacred poets of the day—

> We were like them that dream;
> Then was our mouth filled with laughter,

[1] Ps. xcvi. 10. See also Ps. xcvii. 99.

And our tongue with singing.
Then was it said among the heathen:
"Jehovah has done great things for them."
Yes! Jehovah *has* done great things for us,
And made us glad.
O Jehovah, lead back our captive ones!
Let them roll on the now desolate land
With a flood full as the torrents of the Negeb
In the time of a winter storm.[1]

The prospect before those who returned was for the time sad; for Jerusalem lay in heaps, and must be rebuilt amidst many difficulties. But

They that sow in tears will reap in joy;
He that goes afield weeping, to scatter his armful of seed,
Will (one day) come from it again bearing His sheaves.

There was thus both joy and a thoughtful sadness among the exiles. Far and near throughout the empire, heralds proclaimed the good news that made every Jew a free man. Multitudes had been sold as slaves when first brought from Judah; not a few to hard masters. But now they that "sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, bound in affliction and iron," found their prison gates thrown open, and their bands broken in sunder.[2] As the news travelled from land to land, the best of the race set their faces, from every region, towards Jerusalem. Not a few, we may believe, found their way to the loved spot, from the West, by sea,[3] making light of any suffering it brought, if only, at last, they stood once more in Zion. The route of many, from the distant East, did not pass near Babylon, and they could only reach Palestine long after the main body of their brethren. A kindlier

[1] Ps. cxxvi. This seems the meaning of this figure; see vol. v. p. 386.

[2] Ps. cvii. 10–14.

[3] Ps. cvii. 23–30.

feeling had latterly been cherished by some of the native population towards the exiles; and now that royalty smiled on them, they were loaded with favour. The richer Jews, contented with their position, preferred, for the most part, to remain in Babylon. But while themselves faint-hearted, they were proud of the braver spirits, who, having little to lose, more readily joined the great movement, and they liberally contributed whatever might be useful on the way or in Palestine. Cyrus, himself, commanded his treasurer, Mithridates, to hand over, from the treasure house of the Temple of Bel, to those about to return, all the sacred vessels of gold and silver carried off by Nebuchadnezzar at the destruction of Jerusalem. No fewer than 5,400 salvers, cups, tankards, spoons, basins, etc., of the precious metals, were thus once more delivered to the priests.[1] Beasts of burden, supplies of food, and all the requirements of the journey and its subsequent object, seem to have been liberally added, with much besides, toward the great object of restoring the worship of the Temple on Mount Zion.

The body of pilgrims, of both sexes, found at last willing to face the perils of the desert, and of their ruined native land, amounted to no more than 42,360, including children above twelve years of age.[2] Besides these, there were 7,337 male and female slaves, 200 of them trained singers and musicians. Of the twenty-four priestly "courses," only four had representatives, although the number of these was over 4,000;[3] nearly a tenth of the whole caravan. The enterprise was especially fitted to attract the sacred orders; but the indifference of twenty of the priestly clans out of twenty-four shows how wide must

[1] Ezra i. 7; vi. 14. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 10-13. Jer. xxvii. 16-22; xxviii. 2, 3. Dan. v. 3.

[2] This is stated in 1 Esdras v. 41. Ezra ii. 36-39.

have been the defection of the exiles at large, from the faith of their fathers, or, at least, how faint was their enthusiasm for it. Still, the presence of so many priests as actually set out from Babylon, lent a dignity to the whole body of Pilgrim Fathers whom they accompanied. Honoured for their high descent and venerated office, they formed, moreover, a nucleus round which the religious life of the new colony might gather. But the general indifference or apostasy of their order was insignificant compared with that of the Levites. Formerly much more numerous than the priests, only seventy-four cared to leave Babylon. A defection so striking was destined to have important results. Hitherto humble in their position, the fewness of the Levites in the new community henceforth led to a constant struggle for equality with their more favoured brethren, though they gained it only at the latest period of the nation. Besides the Levites strictly so called, there were, however, some of the two lower grades of the Levitical order; 128 singers of the clan of Asaph, and 139 of the order of Temple police, who guarded the gates and circuit of the sacred building; descendants of the men who, under Jehoiada, had destroyed the heathen tyranny of Athaliah.[1]

Besides these, there was a lowly band of 392 "Nethinim," labourers "given" to the Temple authorities as slaves, and of "the descendants of Solomon's slaves." The former were representatives of the old Canaanite thralls of the days of Joshua,[2] recruited perhaps by prisoners of war, taken at different times, from Arab tribes,[3]—

[1] See vol. iv. p. 148. [2] Josh. ix. 21–27.

[3] Some of the Nethinim are called Mehunim (Ez. ii. 50), apparently an Arab tribe from Mount Seir. Others are called Nephusim, or descendants of Naphosh, an Arab tribe on the east of Palestine (1 Chron. v. 19).

the latter, descendants of the Canaanites, whom Solomon had enslaved for his public works.[1]

At a time when religious enthusiasm ran so high, it was natural that great care should be taken in registering the free citizens and priests allowed to take part in the great migration, since the inheritance of property and the legal discharge of the offices of religion depended on family descent. Failure to satisfy the registrars did not indeed prevent the return of any one with his brethren to Palestine, but it withheld some privileges from laymen, and excluded priests from the exercise of their office. Nor were strict precautions uncalled for. At least one body of intending emigrants from an outlying part of Chaldea—perhaps a remnant of some ancient deportation from Palestine,—were not able to "show their father's house," or give their pedigree,[2] while another, claiming priestly rank, on the ground of descent from Barzillai, the friend of David, failing to prove their Aaronic descent, were pronounced disqualified for sacred duties, till their position could be settled by the high priestly Urim and Thummim,[3] which, as a matter of fact, disappeared with the Captivity. This mysterious ornament may have been overlooked in the restoration of sacred objects by Cyrus, but more probably it had been lost at the destruction of the Temple. Whatever its fate, it was never seen after the Return.

At the head of the great body of the migration were two men, specially fitted for their position. Foremost stood Zerubbabel, "the Prince of Judah," a grandson of the popular king, Jehoiachin, and thus a descendant of the great national hero, David—the only person of royal blood who returned at this time, though others followed

[1] 1 Kings ix. 20. 2 Chron. viii. 7. [2] Ezra ii. 59.
[3] Ezra ii. 63. 1 Esdras v. 36–40.

at a later period.[1] His name seems to indicate that he was born in Babylonia,[2] presumably in the earlier years of the Captivity, though, like Daniel, he had also a Chaldean name, Sheshbazzar.[3] Alive twenty years later, he could not, however, at this time have been very old. Next him stood Joshua, the high priest, grandson of the high priest Seraiah, whom Nebuchadnezzar had put to death at Riblah, after the fall of the Holy City.[4] In these two the multitude had worthy leaders, whose personal claims were strengthened by hereditary rank. Nor were those who followed them unworthy of such chiefs; for, apart from the body of priests, even the rank and file were descended from the flower of the nation, carried off with king Jehoiachin, from Judah and Benjamin. Ten leaders, under Zerubbabel and Joshua, twelve in all, perhaps in touching allusion to the original number of the Tribes, marshalled the host in as many divisions.

If we may trust later traditions, the setting out of the "Captivity" for Palestine was joyous in the extreme. An escort of one thousand cavalry accompanied them, for protection against the desert Arabs, then, as now, given to plunder, and they started to the music of tabrets and flutes.[5] The few rich among them indulged in the luxury of horses, of which there were 736, or of mules, of which there were 245. The aged, the children, and the delicate women rode on camels, which stalked along, 420 in number, while 6,270 asses were partly used for riding, but mainly carried baggage. But that there should have been only 7,671 beasts of carriage for 50,000 people, shows that all but a few marched on foot, and

[1] Ezra i. 8; v. 14. [2] "Zerua Babel" = begotten in Babylon.
[3] Gesenius and Dietrich think this name Persian, meaning "Fire-worshipper." Fürst suggests the Sanscrit word for "illustrious."
[4] 1 Chron. v. 40. 2 Kings xxv. 18. [5] 1 Esdras v. 2.

that there was little to carry, unless some details have been left unrecorded.

The dreary journey across the desert takes over four months, at the rate of such caravans.[1] From the Euphrates to the north of Syria the route lay over a hard gravel plain, with no mountains, or clumps of palms, or bubbling springs, to break the wearying monotony. It ran at first on the west side of the Euphrates, northward from Babylon; then struck across the desert towards Lebanon, which may have been skirted on the south-east, if they made for Damascus, or approached from the north, by Hamath and Riblah, which was apparently the usual road in those days. By a singular coincidence, the new Exodus took place in the same month as that in which Israel had fled from Egypt, 800 or 900 years before.[2]

The state of Palestine when the exiles at last reached it, after their painful journey, was far from inspiriting. On the south, the Edomites had seized Hebron and all Judah, down to the Philistine Plain, while on the north-east of Jerusalem, between Jericho and the shrunken territory of Samaria, they had appropriated a large tract and built a town, fitly called Akrabbim—"the scorpions," or "scourges." That the hereditary enemy of Jerusalem, who had laughed at its downfall, and hounded on the Chaldeans against its population, should hold great part of the country, was almost intolerable to the new comers.[3] A long and embittered strife to regain the territory thus seized, marked the next four hundred years. The Edomites, driven out of their own country

[1] That the news of the fall of Jerusalem took five months to reach Ezekiel, shows that the person who brought it had stayed by the way, at some point—perhaps Damascus.

[2] 1 Esdras v. 6. Exod. xii. 18. [3] 1 Macc. iv. 29; v. 3.

by the Nabatheans, clung eagerly to their new acquisitions in Palestine, which may have been given them by Nebuchadnezzar, in return for their services against the Jews, that they might keep in check the Hebrews still in the land. A few towns and a small territory had to be resigned to the returned exiles, by command of Cyrus; but with this exception, the Edomites held their ground, with little loss, till subdued by John Hyrcanus about 130 years before Christ, when they were forced to submit to circumcision, and had Jewish prefects set over them.

The centre of the land was in the hands of the descendants of the mixed races settled in it by the Assyrian kings, after the destruction of Samaria.[1] In spite of the large deportations from the Northern Kingdom to the East, great numbers of Israelites had escaped captivity, and having intermarried with the new foreign population, infused so strong a Jewish feeling into their children, as to lead them in the end to claim that they, as well as the people of Judah, were Hebrews. The desire to unite with the southern Jews was, indeed, of old date; for the later kings of Judah had won back many of the survivors of the Northern Kingdom to loyalty to Jerusalem. The bands who were present from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun, at the passover of Hezekiah,[2] the contributions towards the repairs of the Temple, collected, under Josiah, from "Manasseh and Ephraim, and all the remnant of Israel,"[3] and the company of pilgrims slain by Ishmael on their way from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria, to the ruins of the Holy City,[4] had, strikingly shown the depth of this sentiment. But the exclusive narrowness of the new founders of Jerusalem was destined

[1] See vol. iv. p. 240.
[2] 2 Chron. xxx. 11.
[3] 2 Chron. xxxiv. 9.
[4] Jer. xli. 5–8.

soon to turn a feeling thus friendly into the fiercest hatred.

The stronghold of Bethshean—afterwards known as Scythopolis—was held by the descendants of the Scythians, who had remained there after the terrible invasion in the reign of Josiah, and thus formed, as it were, the outpost of the heathen races, who, in the main, peopled Galilee—"the heathen-march."[1]

Galilee itself, we all know, was recognised in the days of Christ as largely Jewish, the jealousy of the South never proposing to exclude its Hebrew population from national privileges, though so relentless in the case of the Samaritans. The northern region had, in fact, been largely resettled by exiles returned from the captivity of the Ten Tribes—a "remnant" still faithful to Jehovah, though the mass of their brethren had merged themselves in the heathenism of the East, or at least preferred to remain beyond the Euphrates. When the Second Book of Esdras was written, it had come to be believed that the great body of the northern Jews had left Assyria long before, for "a further country where never mankind dwelt,"[2] but would be brought back in the days of the Messiah. Josephus fancied the Ten Tribes were still beyond the Euphrates,[3] and since then, age after age has seen fresh speculations respecting them. Afghanistan, China, Nestoria, the wilds of Western America, and even the supposed Polhynia[4] round the

[1] *Ewald*, vol. v. p. 98.

[2] 2 Esdras xiii. 41. The date of this book is assigned by Hilgenfeld to B.C. 28–25. Gfrörer and others, however, think it belongs tot he age of Domitian, A.D. 81–96, while Lücke, originally at least, fancied it written under Trajan, A.D. 98–117.

[3] Jos., *Ant.*, XI. v. 2.

[4] A gentleman gravely maintained this opinion to me when

North Pole, have been regarded as the place of their sojourn. But if only a "remnant" of Judah could be induced to return after a comparatively brief exile, how much less could any return of the whole Ten Tribes be expected, after a residence in the East of more than a century longer?

The language of the prophets is constantly quoted in support of the fancy, so popular in our day, that the Ten Tribes are yet to return from some unknown land and inhabit Palestine. When it is remembered, however, that similar language employed of the exiles of Judah in Babylon was fulfilled by the return of a very small proportion of their whole number, it will be seen that the return of the Ten Tribes which has already taken place, is a corresponding fulfilment of what had been predicted respecting the sons of the Northern Kingdom. But though the Jewish population of Galilee was a vindication of prophecy, the relations of the northern tribes to the southern was henceforth to be changed. The very name of Israel was to be relinquished. That of Judah was alone to remain. In earlier days, "Israel" had superseded the national name of Hebrew; but from the period of the return, that of "Jew" or "Judean" took the place of both.

The new colony was thus hemmed in on all sides by other races. It held only a small district round Jerusalem and the city itself, and even for that it had to thank the favour of Cyrus. The list of towns named by Ezra and Nehemiah as the first homes of their brethren, includes only Bethlehem on the south, while on the north their territory did not extend beyond the narrow

Captain Nares' expedition to the North was being sent out, and I have seen it advanced in print since then.

limits of Benjamin.[1] Even a generation afterwards, Southern Judah had not been won by the Hebrews.[2] In the time of Nehemiah, however, nearly a hundred years later, they at last got a footing in Hebron, to which its Canaanite population had once more given the old name of Kirjath-Arba,[3] and they had pushed their boundaries some distance into the Negeb.[4] Beersheba, indeed, on the edge of the southern desert, then had again a village round its wells, and the clan of Temple-singers ultimately established themselves in the Jordan valley, having forced the Edomites to give them lands in that district.[5] On the west, however, the Philistines eagerly reasserted their independence; speaking their own language and worshipping Dagon, as of old, in their capital Ashdod.[6]

The Jewish community, under Zerubbabel and the high priest Joshua, its civil and religious heads, with the ten inferior leaders appointed in Babylon, was organized more fully very soon after the Return. A body of superior magistrates, known as "Sarim" or "Horim," was appointed, and the ancient order of elders once more installed, as heads of limited districts and of the smaller towns.[7] Over the whole stood the local Persian governor, whose headquarters were, perhaps, at Samaria, Zerubbabel being responsible to him, and under his authority in matters of importance.[8] The houses of the foreign population, removed to make room for the new colony, may have sheltered a portion of the emigrants, but Jerusalem

[1] Neh. vii. 25–30. Ezra ii. 23, 28, 34.
[2] Zech. vii. 7.
[3] Art. on Kirjath-Arbah, in *Dict. of Bible.*
[4] Neh. xi. 25–35.
[5] See Lists in Ezra and Nehemiah.
[6] Neh. iv. 7; xiii. 24. 1 Macc. x. 84.
[7] Ezra ix. 2, 10; viii. 14. Neh. iii. 9, 12, 14, 15; iv. 10.
[8] Neh. ii. 7–9. There were at least two Persian governors of the lands west of the Euphrates—Syria in the widest sense.

itself lay in ruins, and the exiles must for a time have lived mostly in tents. How many Jews were already in Judah when their brethren from the Euphrates arrived, cannot be known; but they were probably numerous, since the bulk of the peasantry seems to have been left in the country by Nebuchadnezzar. Besides these, fresh bands from every part of the world constantly arrived and strengthened the national movement. But, henceforth, Israel was to be only a vassal of the heathen. Its independence was gone for ever, except during the brief interval of the Maccabean revolt. Persians, Greeks, Syrians, and Romans, were to rule, the Jewish people preserving an existence only under the shadow of their power.

The Return had been pre-eminently a religious impulse. Weaned for ever from idolatry, profoundly penitent for the former backslidings of their nation, and kindled into enthusiasm for Jehovah by the glowing words of the prophets, the colonists indulged in dreams of a splendid national and religious future. The central wonder of the State was to be the new Temple on Mount Zion, which, with Jerusalem, Ezekiel had painted as covering a great part of Palestine. Its material magnificence, moreover, and that of the capital, were to be in keeping with this transcendent ideal. Hence, the first thought of the exiles on reaching their fatherland, was to restore the ancient faith. As a step towards this, contributions were invited to begin the rebuilding of the Temple on its former site, and the response was munificent. The rich heads of clans, or "fathers' houses," gave the great sum of 20,000 darics, or about £12,000, in gold, and 2,000 minæ of silver, or about £22,000;[1] while the common people gave

[1] Taking the mina as = 100 shekels. *Gesenius.* The word translated "pound" is "mina" (Neh. vii. 70–72). The amounts

as much in gold, and about £20,000 in silver, besides sixty-seven robes for priests. In addition to this, Zerubbabel, apparently the richest of the exiles, added the splendid gilt of 1,000 golden darics, about £6,000, 50 basons, and 530 robes for the priests, most of whom appear to have been very poor.

Six months had elapsed between the setting out from Babylon and the distribution of the new community in their future localities in Judah.[1] No sooner was this effected, however, than a general gathering of the people was called at Jerusalem, to raise anew the long destroyed altar of Jehovah on the exact spot where it had formerly stood. The first wave of enthusiasm was still at its height, and could not content itself with even the huge dimensions of the altar of Solomon. The golden future of the race, and the world-wide triumph of its faith, demanded an altar twice the size.[2] This built, its inauguration followed on the first day of the seventh month, with the utmost splendour possible under the circumstances. Vast numbers from the various races and districts of the whole country were desirous to make Jerusalem their religious centre, and for the time befriended the colony,[3] perhaps helping it by contributions. Their presence added to the glory of the day. Once more the smoke of the morning and evening sacrifice arose, and henceforth each week-day and Sabbath, with the new moons and other festivals, saw

in Nehemiah are more detailed than in Ezra, but the aggregate is smaller. Ezra makes the whole contributions 61,000 golden darics = £36,600, besides 5,000 minæ = £50,000. The priests' dresses, however, are given as only 100. Perhaps the two statements refer to distinct contributions at different times. Ezra ii. 69.

[1] Ezra iii. 1.

[2] *Graetz*, ii. 2, 83.

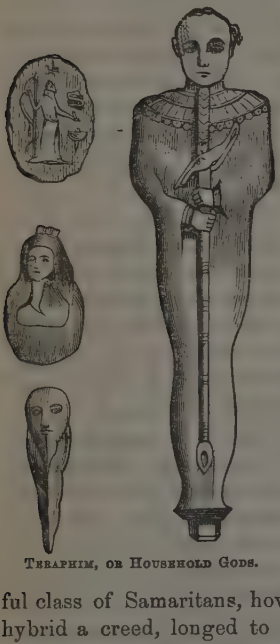
[3] 1 Esdras v. 50, amended by Gesenius.

their appropriate offerings and sacrifices duly presented or consumed. The day chosen for the inaugural ceremony was also that of the great autumnal Feast of Tabernacles, the harvest home of the land; a day famous as that on which Solomon had dedicated his Temple, though it was marked, also, as the same on which Jeroboam consecrated the rival sanctuary of Bethel. The joyous feast was now kept with glad hearts and high hopes. Loud "Amens" from the people answered the chants and jubilant noise of the Levites. It was the birthday of the restored nation. Then first, if modern criticism be correct, rose the strains of the 115th Psalm,[1] with its lofty protest against idolatry, and its proud trust in Jehovah alone as the God of Israel.

But the foundation of the Temple was not yet laid.[2] Money, however, was in the treasury, and the rich produce of the land furnished materials for barter.[3] Masons and carpenters were hired at Jerusalem, and Phenician sailors were engaged to bring down in rafts, by sea, to Joppa, the cedars granted by Cyrus for the future sanctuary. Great efforts were also made by Zerubbabel and the high priests, zealously aided by priest, Levite, and citizen, to clear the site of the old Temple, and prepare for laying the foundation of another. Yet it was not till the second month of the second year, B.C. 535, that this imposing ceremony could take place. By that time the new stones were squared and ready; the ruins sufficiently out of the way. On the appointed day the priests stood in order, in their new vestments, and the first stone of the second Temple was laid, amidst the blasts of silver trumpets, the clash of cymbals, the music of varied instruments,[4] and the triumphant notes of

[1] *Ewald.*
[2] Ezra iii. 6.
[3] Ezra iii. 7.
[4] 1 Esdras v. 59.

psalms specially composed for the occasion.[1] But sadness as well as joy marked the day. There were aged men in the crowd who could compare the past with the present. In their boyhood they had seen the former Temple, before its destruction, and the recollection overcame them. Loud weeping and sorrowful cries mingled with the sounds of rejoicing; but the bad omen was drowned in still louder shouts of gladness from the multitude.



Teraphim, or Household Gods.

Meanwhile, a wide and sincere interest was felt in the rise of Jerusalem from its ashes. The mingled race of the Samaritan territory, proud of its partly Jewish blood, retained the worship of Jehovah as taught by the priests sent from Assyria to its forefathers, a hundred and fifty years before. But many heathen customs tainted their practice, and they even worshipped idols, especially household gods.[2] The more thoughtful class of Samaritans, however, wearied of so rude and hybrid a creed, longed to join the returned exiles and make Jerusalem their religious centre, feeling that Judah alone had preserved the ancient faith in its purity.

[1] lxxxvii. cvi. cvii. cxviii. cxxxvi. The Pilgrim Psalms cxx.–cxxxiv. seem also to date from this time. [2] Ezra iv. 2.

A mission was therefore sent from the North to Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the elders, to make overtures for co-operation in the great work of rebuilding the Temple. The proposal might well have been accepted under judicious conditions, and a disastrous quarrel averted; but hatred of idolatry was now too strong in the new community, to tolerate any alliance with a people defiled by heathenism. Friendly relations would lead to intermarriage and familiarity with impure worship, and the tendency is always greater to sink than to rise. The Mosaic law, moreover, was held with a superstitious veneration, which overlooked the spirit in homage to the letter. The proposal, made apparently in good faith, was therefore declined. Judah would itself build the Temple, as Cyrus had permitted, without help.

The results of this exclusiveness were momentous. Two parties rose among the Jews themselves: Puritans and Broad Churchmen. Old jealousies and hatreds were rekindled. Samaria had been despised, before the Exile, as a heathen community; it began to be so again. But it had a dangerous weapon of attack in its turn. The presence of a descendant of David at the head of Judah, gave a specious colour to pretexts of possible political complications in the future. The Persian officials in Samaria lent themselves only too readily to these suspicions. Hired counsellors were sent to Ecbatana and Susa, to spread them at court, and they succeeded in stopping the Temple works till the death of Cyrus, in a distant war in Upper Asia, seven years later.[1] Nor were they even then allowed to recommence. Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, was too much engaged in his campaigns to trouble himself about the small colony at Jerusalem, and, thus, through his reign also, no progress was made.[2]

[1] Ezra iv. 24. [2] B.C. 529–522.

Then followed the reign of an impostor—the false Smerdis or Bardes,[1] who claimed to be the murdered brother of Cambyses, but was detected and put to death after a reign of between seven and eight months. It was only in the second year of the next king, Darius Hystaspis, that the sound of the workmen was again heard on Mount Moriah.

In these weary years, criminations and recriminations at Jerusalem lowered the moral tone and cooled the zeal of the Jewish colony.[2] But better days returned with the accession of Darius in the year B.C. 522, fourteen years after the Return. Just and honourable, he became another Cyrus to them, and the second founder of the new State.

[1] Cambyses had secretly murdered his brother Bardes, and an impostor, Gaumata the Magian, had seized the throne in the name of the dead prince. See Eber's *Egyptian Princess*, where the story of Bardes is charmingly told, from Herodotus.

[2] Ewald thinks the Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes in Ezra iv. 6, 7, are Cambyses and the false Smerdis respectively. But Schrader and Keil suppose that verses 6 to 24 are in their wrong place, by the error of some scribe, and refer them to the reign of Xerxes B.C. 486–465, and Artaxerxes of the Long Hand, B.C. 465–425. The names as given in Ezra seem to support this. It is now the generally accepted opinion. See *Riehm* and the *Calwer Handwörterbuch*

# CHAPTER XVIII.

## HAGGAI AND ZECHARIAH.

THE reign of Darius was marked by the appearance of two prophets—Haggai and Zechariah—who, wearied by the apathy of their countrymen, took advantage of the accession of a prince so friendly to the nation, to stimulate their countrymen to a resumption of the long delayed work of rebuilding the Temple. Of these two, Haggai was much the older; for he was either one of the captives led from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and thus had seen the old Temple in its glory, or, at latest, had been born in Babylon at the beginning of the Exile.[1] During the Captivity he had, no doubt, helped forward the great religious revival to which the Return was due, though no record of his preaching in those dark years remains. The second, Zechariah, a much younger man,[2] was the son or grandson of Iddo,[3] the head of one of the priestly houses represented in the Jerusalem colony. Like Ezekiel, he was of priestly extraction; but he belonged, besides, to a family of prophets, for he inherited

[1] Hagg. ii. 3. Ewald thinks he had seen the first Temple.

[2] Zech. ii. 4.

[3] In Ezra v. 1; vi. 14, he is called the son of Iddo; in Zech. i. 1–7, the grandson.

his dignity, as one of the order, from his father or grandfather. Born in a generation in which the Apocalyptic visions of Daniel and Ezekiel had introduced a new form of prophetic utterance, his prophecies are marked by a similar characteristic. The influence of his Babylonian life moreover is seen in his imagery and allusions. Thus he uses the regnal years of the Great King for his dates,[1] and, among other Eastern colourings, introduces in his third vision the Persian custom of clothing a person accused, in soiled garments, to be exchanged for white when he is acquitted.

It was in the second year of Darius Hystaspis, on the first day of the sixth month, September or October, B.C. 521 that Haggai first presented himself before Zerubbabel and Joshua, to stir both them and the people to renewed efforts towards the rebuilding of the Temple. The exaggerated hopes of the first period of the Return had died away. Instead of the glorious Messianic times they had expected, only trouble and disappointment had befallen them. It seemed as if they had been deceived by the prophets. Their zeal died away under such discouragement. After fifteen years, the altar on Mount Moriah, and the laying of the foundation stone, were the only results of their lofty anticipations that a Temple grander than that of Solomon would speedily rise before them. But if they had been disappointed in this direction, their material circumstances had improved. Debarred from restoring the national sanctuary, but free in other respects, they had devoted themselves to worldly affairs. Fine houses, owned by the richer colonists, had risen among the ruins of Jerusalem, and this prosperity had still further lowered their religious tone. Warnings of the displeasure of God at their apathy and spiritual

[1] Zech. i. 1–7.

decline were not, however, wanting; for droughts had visited the land, the heavens had been "stayed from dew," and the earth "from her fruit." But they still urged that the time for rebuilding the House of God had not yet come;[1] fresh permission, they maintained, being required from the Great King. This hypocritical plea Haggai boldly met by a stern attack on their insincerity.

4 Is it time for you yourselves,—cried he,[2]—to live in your houses, panelled (with costly woods), while this house—the House of God—lies waste? 5 Now, therefore, thus says Jehovah of Hosts: CONSIDER YOUR WAYS, and their results! 6 Ye have sown much, and brought in little. Ye eat, but it does not satisfy you; ye drink, but it does not quench your thirst; ye clothe yourselves, but it does not serve to warm you; and he that earns, finds his gain vanish as if put into a bag with holes. 7 Thus says Jehovah of Hosts, CONSIDER YOUR WAYS, and their results! 8 Go up to the hill-country, and bring timber and build My house, and I will have pleasure in it, and feel Myself honoured, says Jehovah. 9 Ye looked for much from your fields, and it came to little, and when ye brought it home I blew on it. Why? says Jehovah of Hosts. "Because of My House which lies waste, while ye, every one, run to build his own house. 10 For this, the heaven has kept back from yielding dew, and the earth from yielding fruit, 11 and I have called up a drought on land and hill, and on the corn, and wine, and oil, and on all that the ground yields, and on men and cattle, and all the labour of your hands."

Haggai took it for granted that no new permission to build the Temple was needed, since the one given by Cyrus had never been withdrawn, though the work had been forbidden. Fortunately, the people and their leading men accepted this view, and resolved to act on the counsel of Haggai, to which they listened with reverent awe. In about three weeks the sound of labour once more rose from the top of Moriah.[3]

[1] Hagg. i. 2. [2] Hagg. i. 4–11. [3] Hagg. i. 15.

Four weeks later, the venerable prophet again presented himself before the people and their leaders. The walls of the Temple were now being rapidly built; but as they rose, it was evident that the new building would be far less magnificent than the old. Most of the citizens were poor, and the few rich were, in too many cases, indifferent. But if the gloom of some, and the coldness of others, were calculated to dispirit the workers, Haggai, cheerful and confident, was ready to encourage them by the promise of a better time, when their brethren in other lands, and even the heathen, would interest themselves in the great undertaking, and cause the glory of this second Temple to be greater than that of the first.

3 Who is left among you [2] who has seen this House in its former glory? And how see ye it now? does it not appear as nothing in your eyes in comparison?

4 Yet, be of good heart, O Zerubbabel, says Jehovah; be of good heart, O Joshua, the high priest, son of Josedech, and be of good heart all ye people of the land, says Jehovah, and work! For I am with you, says Jehovah of Hosts. 5 The covenant that I made with you when ye came out of Egypt, stands firm, and My Spirit remains in your midst; fear ye not! 6 For thus says Jehovah of Hosts: it will be only a little while till I shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea and the dry land, 7 and till I shake all nations, and the wealth of all will come hither, and I will fill this House with splendour, says Jehovah of Hosts. 8 The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says Jehovah of Hosts. 9 The glory of this house will be greater than that of the former, says Jehovah of Hosts, and in this place will I give peace, says Jehovah of Hosts.[3]

Three months after the community had recommenced work on the Temple, another prophetic message came,

[1] Hagg. ii. 1. [2] Hagg. ii. 3–9.

[3] This passage is shown in Heb. xii. 12–26 to have a higher reference to the triumphs of Messianic times, in the fall of heathenism, and the glory of Christ.

through Haggai, to the people. Their faintheartedness was gone, and they toiled with zeal and energy. It was now desirable to confirm their fidelity by an assurance that, if it continued, the blessings of the fields, which had been withheld from them, would be restored. The drought and trials of the past had been a punishment for their neglect of the House of God, and would now be removed. It was about the end of November, when the sowing of winter grain was over, and the early rains had begun; in themselves an earnest of the Divine blessing.

11 Thus says Jehovah of Hosts—said Haggai [1]—Ask now the priests for instruction in the Law, saying: 12 If a man carry holy flesh of offerings [2] in the skirt of his garment, and touch bread or cooked food [3] or wine or oil, or any kind of food, will what it touches become holy? And the priests answered, "No."[4]

13 And Haggai said, If a person made unclean by touching a dead body touch any of these things just named, shall what he touches become unclean? And the priests said: "It does become unclean."[5] 14 Then answered Haggai, Thus is this people and this nation before Me, says Jehovah, and thus is all the work of their hands.[6] 15 And, now, turn your thoughts from this day

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[1] Hagg ii. 11-19. [2] Jer. xi. 15.

[3] Gen. xxv. 29, or 2 Kings iv. 38.

[4] Lev. vi. 20 says that the skirt in which consecrated flesh was carried was thereby, itself, "holy," but it could not impart holiness by what was touched by it. The priests, therefore, were right in their answer. [5] Num. xix. 22.

[6] The raising an altar on their return was a "holy" act, but their delay in building the Temple was wrong, and the good could not make the wrong change its character any more than the "holy flesh" could communicate its goodness to the "common" or unconsecrated food. Moreover, this sin took away the good of their former act—the raising the altar—as the touch of a person defiled by a dead body polluted that with which it came into contact. They had lost their "cleanness" before God, and might justly be punished by the drought, etc. But now that they had

backward, to the time before stone was laid on stone in the Temple of Jehovah. 16 Before this, when a man came to a heap of corn which he expected to be twenty measures, there were only ten; and when he came to the vat of the wine-press, expecting to draw off fifty measures of wine, there were only twenty. 17 I smote you with blight, mildew, and hail, in all the work of your hands, yet none of you turned to Me, says Jehovah! 18 But, now, turn back your thoughts from this day to the twenty-fourth of the ninth month, the day on which the foundation of the Temple of Jehovah was laid—think on the matter. 19 Was there seed in the barn before that day? Were not vine and fig-tree and pomegranate and olive alike unfruitful? But from that day, when the building was recommenced, I will bless you!

On the same day Haggai received another message to deliver to Zerubbabel. It ran thus—

21 I, Jehovah,[1] will shake the heavens and the earth, 22 and I will overturn the throne of the kingdoms, and destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen, and destroy the chariots and those who ride in them, and overwhelm the horses and their riders, every one by the sword of the other. 23 In that day, says Jehovah of Hosts, I will take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, says Jehovah, and make thee like a signet ring on My hand; [2] for I have chosen thee, says Jehovah of Hosts.[3]

The discourses of Haggai had been delivered between the sixth and ninth months of the second year of Darius—September to November, B.C. 521—and, as we have seen, had made a profound impression. This was

recommenced the Temple, this state of things no longer existed, and God was free once more to bless the land, which had suffered for their sake.

[1] Hagg. ii. 21-23.

[2] The signet ring is never laid aside by its wearer, but is especially valued by the owner. Gen. xxxviii. 18.

[3] It is possible that the Hebrew prince may have asked Haggai as to his safety in the midst of the political troubles of the empire, and that this is the answer.

deepened by the appearance of his young contemporary, Zechariah, in the month of October—the eighth month[1]—while the earlier words of his aged fellow-prophet were still fresh in all minds, and his later ones had not yet been spoken. Three months later,[2] in January, B.C. 520, he came before the people again; but an interval of twenty-two months elapsed before his next address.[3]

In the true prophetic spirit, Zechariah, like Haggai, dwells entirely on the moral hindrances to the rebuilding of the Temple. The plots of enemies do not trouble him. Fifteen years had passed since the Return, and the walls of the sanctuary were not yet raised, while the city itself was being laboriously, and in some cases splendidly, restored. Haggai, a month before, had striven to rouse his contemporaries, by predicting that, notwithstanding appearances, the glory of the second House would be even greater than that of the first,[4] but his words had had little effect. Zechariah, therefore, warns them to take a lesson from the fate of their fathers. *Their* disobedience to the prophets had been their ruin; let no such result follow now from a similar cause. The drought and the opposition from without, showed that God was displeased; let them seek to regain His favour. He thus begins:—

2 Jehovah,[5] has been very wroth with your fathers, 3 therefore say unto these, their sons; thus says Jehovah of Hosts, "Turn ye to Me, says Jehovah of Hosts, and I will turn to you, says Jehovah of Hosts." 4 Be not like your fathers, to whom the prophets of former days cried, saying, "Thus says Jehovah of Hosts, Turn ye now from your evil ways and from your evil doings." But they did not hear or give heed to Me, says Jehovah. 5 Your fathers—where are they? And the prophets, could even they live for ever? But though all these, alike, are dead, 6 My words

[1] Zech. i. 1. [2] Zech. i. 7. [3] Zech. vii. 1.
[4] Hagg. ii. 9. [5] Zech. i. 2–6.

and My commands which I commissioned My servants the prophets to declare, have they not overtaken your fathers, so that they turned and said, "As Jehovah of Hosts decreed to do to us, according to our ways and doings, so has He dealt with us."

Three months later Zechariah announced a series of prophetic night-visions with which he had been favoured, thus repeating the peculiar characteristic of Ezekiel and Daniel, which was, hereafter, to create so widely extended a school of Jewish Apocalyptic literature. The whole succession of visions, seven in number, came, we are told, in the same night, and all alike are designed to confirm the prediction of Haggai, uttered two months before, that Jehovah would assuredly bless and honour His people, if they were faithful to Him.

In the first vision,[1] a rider on a red horse, followed by others on red, speckled, and white horses, appeared to the prophet among a clump of myrtles,[2] growing in a hollow, and were explained to be those sent out by Jehovah through the earth, which they had found still and peaceful, with no signs, anywhere, of that "shaking of the nations," and overthrow of the enemies of Israel, predicted by Haggai.[3] On hearing this, an angel, who stood by, breaks out into a supplication to God to have pity on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, which had now lain waste seventy years. Forthwith Jehovah answers in "good and comfortable words," which the angel embodies in a command that Zechariah should cry aloud to his people, as follows:—

14 Thus says Jehovah of Hosts:[4] I am full of loving zeal for Jerusalem and Zion, 15 but of indignation at the heathen dwelling

[1] Zech. i. 8-17.

[2] Except in Zechariah, the myrtle is mentioned only in Isa. xli. 19; lv. 13.

[3] Hagg. ii. 7.

[4] Zech. i. 14-17.

in proud security; for when I was only a little angry with Israel, they added to his affliction. 16 Therefore, thus says Jehovah: I have returned to Jerusalem with mercies; My House shall be rebuilt in her; this is the saying of Jehovah of Hosts; and the measuring line shall be stretched out over the soil of Jerusalem. 17 Preach, moreover, and say, Thus says Jehovah of Hosts: My cities will again overflow with prosperity, and Jehovah will again comfort Zion and choose Jerusalem.

It was thus foreshadowed that God would visit with His anger, the heathen, now so secure, and renew His favour to Judah. The second vision illustrated His deliverance of Israel in the past, and His overthrow of their foes in the future. Four horns, the symbols of power, rose before the prophet, the emblems of the kingdoms that had "scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem,"[1] but forthwith appeared also four craftsmen, to the terror of the horns, to cast them down.

Next was seen a man with a measuring line in his hand,[2] as if to measure the circuit of Jerusalem. He refrains from doing so, however, because the new city would be unwalled, like the open country, to contain the multitude of its population and cattle; Jehovah Himself serving at once as its glory and its defence, in the absence of bulwarks and fortifications.[3] With such prospects before Judah, it was incomprehensible to the prophet that so many of the exiles should still remain in Babylonia. Hence, in the fulness of his joy, he lovingly invites them to seek a place in the favoured city of their fathers.

6 Hark ye,[4] hark, and flee from the land of the North, says

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[1] Zech. i. 18–21. [2] Zech. ii. 1–5.

[3] Jerusalem, though it had walls, in the end extended itself widely on every side over the neighbouring hills. Wright's *Zechariah*, p. 36. [4] Zech. ii. 6–13.

Jehovah, for I will spread forth your dwellings to the four winds of heaven.[1] O Zion, deliver thyself; thou that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon. 8 For thus says Jehovah of Hosts: He has sent me (His Angel)[2] to the nations who spoiled you, to win glory at their cost, for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye. 9 For, lo, I[3] swing my hand over them, and they will be a prey to those who served them, and ye shall know that Jehovah of Hosts has sent me. 10 Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for, lo, I am coming, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, says Jehovah. 11 And many nations will join themselves to Jehovah in that day, and will be for a people to Me, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that Jehovah of Hosts has sent me to thee. 12 And Jehovah will take possession of Judah as His portion in the Holy Land, and will choose Jerusalem again. 13 Be silent, all flesh, before Jehovah, for He has raised Himself up from (His repose in) His holy dwelling (in the heavens, to effect this).

The more serious among the citizens of Judah, apparently feared that their guilt was too great for the Almighty to pardon, and that this was the cause of their misadventures since their return. To remove such a thought, a fourth vision was vouchsafed to the prophet. Joshua, the high priest,[4] as the representative of the whole people, is seen standing, in soiled robes, like a criminal, before the Angel of Jehovah, with "the adversary"[5] at his right hand, to accuse him. The accusation, however, not only fails; its author is rebuked by Jehovah, "who delights in Jerusalem," for making it. "Is not this (man or community)," it is asked, "a brand plucked from the fire (of exile)?" The soiled robes are then taken off, at the command of the Angel, and robes of

[1] The future vast extension of Jerusalem is referred to.
[2] Zech. ii. 3. [3] The Angel.
[4] Zech. iii. 1-10.
[5] The word is "the Satan" or Adversary, and thus it is not a proper name, but an official title.

honour put on, a pure priestly turban being set, besides, on Joshua's head; the Angel, moreover, promises him, in the name of Jehovah, that if he walked in God's ways and was zealous for His law, he would remain the judge of His House and the guardian of His courts, and would go out and in among the Angels standing there. He and the other dignitaries of the priesthood who sit with him, men of rank and note, are to take heed to what they have heard; for Jehovah is about to bring forth His Servant, the Branch (of David)—that is, the Messiah. Nor is there any fear of God neglecting Zion, for His Providence watches its interests like so many eyes; nay, a stone seen in the vision, as an emblem of the newly founded Theocracy, has seven eyes upon it, and was being prepared by the hand of God Himself, perhaps for the topstone of the New Temple, under the Messiah. The whole is, of course, only a vision, but the lesson was clear. The "Branch," who was to bring salvation to Israel, would assuredly come, and the iniquity of the land would be removed in one day, when the atonement was made once for all, not yearly, as in the past. That accomplished, a blissful time would begin, when each would call his neighbour to sit under his vine and fig-tree, in sweet and holy security.

A new vision followed at a short interval, this time referring to Zerubbabel, as the one before had referred to Joshua, the high priest. There appeared a seven-branched lamp,[1] like that in the Mosaic Tabernacle, with two olive-trees beside it; the symbol, it may be, of the glorious light which the Church was hereafter to shed;[2] or perhaps of the quickening power of the Spirit of God in all that concerned the spiritual Israel.[3] The

[1] Zech. iv. 1–5. [2] *Keil.*

[3] Ewald, Steiner and Eichhorn, think the lamp a symbol of the

lesson it was to teach was conveyed by the attendant Angel.

6 This[1] is the word of Jehovah to Zerubbabel: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit!", says Jehovah of Hosts. 7 Who art thou, O great mountain of difficulties, before Zerubbabel? Become a plain: for He—Jehovah—will bring forth the top-stone (of the New Temple), amidst joyful cries of "Grace, grace from God, be on it."

He had laid its foundation, and He would finish it. No one had a right to despise the past day of small things, for the seven mystic eyes, the visionary emblems of God's watchful providence over all the earth, had already seen with joy the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel, when the foundation stone was laid in the presence of Joshua,[2] and this was an earnest that what God had begun, He would complete.

The Temple thus to be gloriously finished would be marked by the reign of holiness. A flying scroll of a book, of huge size, appeared—thirty feet long and fifteen feet broad—the portentous enbodiment of the curse of the Almighty on all sinners in the land. Like it, the false swearer and the thief would be driven away before the breath of the Divine wrath.[3] Nor was this all; wickedness of every kind would be purged from the bounds now sanctified by the presence of Jehovah in His restored Temple. A huge vessel was also seen in the vision,[4] the emblem of the fate awaiting all evil doers,

New Temple, which was to spring from the efforts of Joshua and Zerubbabel, of whom the two olive-trees were emblems. Keil more justly considers these the representatives of the spiritual agencies, by which God brings His heavenly influence to bear on the Church.

[1] Zech. iv. 6–14. [2] Zech. iii. 9. [3] Zech. v. 1–4.

[4] An "Ephah"—the largest Hebrew dry measure. Keil, *Zacharja*, p. 573.

for on a great round disk of lead which had covered its mouth being lifted, Wickedness, personified as a woman, was seen sitting within, as in a prison, or like a wild beast in its cage. This vessel, two winged female forms presently lifted from the ground, and bore away to Babylonia, the symbol, in those days, of the land of uncleanness and evil, and thus Judah was purged from its presence.[1]

That such modes of presenting spiritual lessons should have ever been popular and intelligible, marks the immense difference between the East and the West. Oriental fancy delights in mysterious imagery and parable, as vehicles of religious truth. The later Hebrew literature, especially, shows these characteristics, but isolated examples of them occur earlier, as in the vision of Micaiah,[2] portions of the introduction to the Book of Proverbs, and the Book of Job as a whole. In the age before Christ, it had become the favourite style of composition, as is seen in the Jewish Sybilline verses, the Book of Henoch, the Book of Jubilees, the Assumption of Isaiah, and the Assumption of Moses, and it has been followed, to a very large extent, by the Rabbis, in later ages. To the Western mind, however, such modes of writing must always remain in great part unintelligible; and indeed, the visions of the prophets, from Ezekiel downwards, have been frankly proclaimed by the Rabbis themselves as beyond full human comprehension. It is vain therefore to attempt to explain the obscure references of those of Zechariah.

This applies in its fullest sense to the seventh and last vision[3] of that eventful night. Four chariots—whether of war or peace is not stated—were seen issuing from between two mountains of copper, which have been

[1] Zech. v. 5-11. [2] 1 Kings xxii. 19 ff. [3] Zech. vi. 1-8.

variously interpreted as vague symbols of the protection extended by God to His people, or of the powers of the world, or of Mounts Olivet and Zion, with the Valley of Jehoshaphat lying between. Ingenuity has exhausted itself in trying to assign a meaning to the colours of the horses in the different chariots; but they may have served, after all, only to distinguish the one chariot from the other. Sent forth to the north and south, and through the earth, they flew, swift as the wind, on their errand, respecting which we have only the mysterious statement of the attendant Angel, that those sent to the north had appeased the Divine anger on that region; a hint, perhaps, that they were commissioned to break up the quiet and haughty security of the heathen kingdoms, and bring on them the judgments of God foretold by the prophets, as the sign of the approach of the Messiah.[1]

Night had now passed; but an incident throwing momentary light on these long dead years took place next morning. Some Jews of the Captivity had come from Babylon, on a visit to their brethren, apparently as a deputation from the great body of exiles who voluntarily remained in Babylonia. They had been hospitably lodged in the house of one Josiah, at Jerusalem, and had brought a tribute of gold and silver with them, to express the sympathy felt for Judah by their brethren on the banks of the Chebar. Of this silver and gold, Zechariah was directed to have crowns made, primarily, for the head of Joshua the high priest, but ultimately to be laid up in the Temple when it was finished, as a memorial before God of those whose loving bounty had provided the materials. The prophet was also commissioned to say to Joshua, in words which look beyond Zerubbabel to the great Messiah:—

[1] Zech. i. 11. Hagg. ii. 7.

12 Behold,[1] a man shall rise, and his name shall be The Branch of David, and under him will all things prosper,[2] and he will build the Temple of Jehovah. 13 He, even he, shall build it, and he will bear kingly glory,[3] and sit and rule on his throne, and he will also be a priest on his throne, and there will be a counsel of peace between him and Jehovah.[4]

Help, of which the crowns were an earnest, would be sent, moreover, from distant lands, as had been so often predicted, if Judah loyally obeyed the voice of its God.[5]

Nearly two years elapsed before the next incident recorded. In December, B.C. 519,[6] a deputation from the inhabitants of Bethel,[7] the ancient seat of the calf-worship, came to Jerusalem to intreat the favour of God for their town, and also to inquire from the priests and prophets, of whom we know only Haggai and Zechariah, whether the fast in the fifth month, to commemorate the destruction of the Temple, should still be continued. Darius had just issued a new decree,[8] ratifying the earlier permission of Cyrus, to rebuild the Temple, which had already, for some time, been rising from its ashes[9] through the influence of the prophets. This activity, however, had not been unopposed. The Persian governor of Syria and Phenicia—the division of the empire west of the Euphrates[10]—with his subordinate officials, sent for the names of those by whose authority the Temple and the city wall were being restored, and demanded the right they had to take such steps. But, though this led to correspondence, the work con-

[1] Zech. vi. 12, 13. [2] *Ewald. Steiner.*

[3] The word used is that appropriated to kingly majesty.

[4] This seems the true meaning of the phrase.

[5] Zech. vi. 15. [6] Kislew.

[7] Zech. vii. 2. "The house of God" should be untranslated, as the proper name "Bethel." [8] Ezra vi. 1.

[9] Ezra iv. 24; v. 2. [1] Ezra v. 3.

tinued steadily to advance. Meanwhile, the Persian governor had transmitted to Darius a report of what was doing. He and his staff, he said, had gone to Jerusalem, and found that the Temple was being rebuilt, on the strength of a decree of Cyrus. Search having been made, in consequence, at Ecbatana, in Media, one of the Persian capitals,[1] the action of the Jews had been vindicated. The decree had been found in the royal palace, and the hostile governor of the West was therefore ordered to allow the work to proceed, and to defray the expense from the imperial treasury. He was, moreover, to provide the requisites for the sacrifices and offerings of the new sanctuary, that the loyal prayers of the worshippers might be secured.[2]

The law of Moses enjoined only one day of fasting in the year—that of the great Day of Atonement,[3] but Israel had long been in the habit of holding fasts for any great national calamity.[4] In Babylon, four had, apparently, been regularly kept each year—on the anniversaries of the capture of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans,[5] of the burning of the city and Temple,[6] of the murder of Gedaliah,[7] and of the beginning of the siege of the Holy City by Nebuchadnezzar.[8] But that which commemorated the burning of the city and Temple seemed, to the people of Bethel, out of place, now that both were rising from their ashes.[9] It was asked, therefore, if it should be continued.

[1] Ezra vi. 2. [2] Ezra vi. 1–12. [3] Lev. xxiii. 26–32.

[4] Jud. xx. 26. 1 Sam. vii. 6; xxxi. 13. Joel ii. 15. Isa. lviii. 3–12. [5] Jer. lii. 6, 7.

[6] 2 Kings xxv. 8. Jer. lii. 12. [7] Jer. xli. 43

[8] 2 Kings xxv. 1. Jer. lii. 4. These fasts were held respectively on the ninth of the fourth month, and the seventh and tenth of the fifth, seventh, and tenth months. See Zech. viii. 19.

[9] Hagg. i. 4.

The answer vouchsafed was a striking illustration of the worthlessness, in the sight of God, of mere outward forms, apart from the spiritual state of those observing them. Not only the men of Bethel, but all the people of the land, were told, in effect, that fasting, like eating and drinking, was their concern, not God's. They were free to fast if they found it of advantage, but their doing so rested with themselves. To lament the burning of the Temple in the fifth month, or the murder of Gedaliah in the seventh, was left to their own pleasure. What God cared for was, that they should obey His words, spoken by the prophets in the days of the glory of Jerusalem and Judah, when the territory of the kingdom extended to the Negeb and the Maritime Plain,[1] now held by the Edomites and the Philistines.

The essence of what was thus uttered to their fathers, Zechariah tells us, was that they should:—

9 Judge righteous judgment,[2] and show love and compassion every one to the other. 10 Do not oppress the widow, or the fatherless, the alien or the poor, and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in his heart. 11 But (he adds) your fathers refused to hearken, and gave an unwilling shoulder to God's yoke, and stopped their ears, that they should not ear. 12 Yea, they hardened their hearts like a diamond, not to hear the Law, and the words sent by Jehovah of Hosts, through His Spirit, by the earlier prophets. 13 Therefore there came great wrath from Jehovah of Hosts. And since they would not hear when He called, so, said He, "They shall call and I will not hear, 14 and I will scatter them with a tempest, among all the nations whom they do not know, and the land shall be desolate behind them, no one passing through or returning to it." Thus the wickedness of your fathers made the pleasant land a desolation.

It had been thus in the past, but better days had come. The newly awakened zeal of the people for Jeho-

[1] Ezra vii. 1-8. [2] Zech. vii. 9-14.

vah had won back His favour, and He would bless them beyond measure, if they honoured His Law in the future. Portions of at least two addresses, to cheer the community by such assurances, still remain. In the first, Zechariah speaks thus:—

2 I, Jehovah of Hosts,[1] am exceeding jealous for the honour of Zion, yea, jealous beyond measure. 3 I have returned to Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and it will be a city of the truth, the mountain of Jehovah of Hosts, the Holy Mountain. 4 Thus says Jehovah of Hosts: Old men and old women shall yet sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each man staff in hand for very age, 5 and the streets will be full of boys and girls playing in them. 6 If this be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people (alive) in those days, shall it be marvellous in My eyes? says Jehovah of Hosts. 7 Thus says He: Behold I am about to save My people from the east and from the west; 8 and I will bring them hither, and they will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and they shall be My people, and I shall be their God, in truth and righteousness.

9 Thus says Jehovah of Hosts: Let your hands be strong, ye who hear these words, from the mouth of the prophets now living in these days, when the House of Jehovah has been founded, even the Temple, that it might be rebuilt. 10 For before these days there were no wages for men, or hire for cattle, and there was no peace to him who went out or came in, because of the enemy,[2] for I let loose all men against each other.

11 But now am I not as I was in former days towards the remnant of this people? says Jehovah of Hosts. 12 For the plant[3] of peace, the vine, will yield its fruit, and the earth its increase, and the heavens their dew; and I will give all this for an inheritance to the remnant of this people. 13 And it shall be, that, as your fate, sent for your punishment from above, was used among the nations as a curse they might invoke on each other, so ye shall be used to bless by, for the Divine favour shown you: fear not; let your hands be strong!

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[1] Zech. viii. 1-17.

[2] The passage shows vividly the wretched condition of the first period of the Return.

[3] Lit., "seed."

14 For thus says Jehovah of Hosts: As I resolved to punish you, when your fathers provoked Me to wrath, and I did not repent from My purpose; 15 so I have once more resolved, in these days, to do good to Jerusalem and to the House of Judah. Fear not! 16 These are the things ye shall do to secure His blessing; speak truth every man to his neighbour, let your judges judge according to truth and peace in your gates;[1] 17 plot no evil in your hearts against your neighbour, and hate the false oath;—for I hate all these things, says Jehovah.

The question of public fasts seems to have still agitated the community, notwithstanding Zechariah's utterance on the subject. He therefore took an opportunity of reverting to it. The four fasts[2] held in Babylon would henceforth be turned to feasts, if they loved truth and peace, and acted up to the Divine requirements.

20 It will yet be that nations, and the people of many cities, will come as pilgrims to Jerusalem; 21 and the inhabitants of one town will go to those of another, and say, "Let us intreat the favour of Jehovah, and seek Jehovah of Hosts"; "I will go also." 22 And many peoples and strong nations will come to seek Jehovah of Hosts in Jerusalem, and to intreat His favour. And 23 in those days ten men from all the languages of the nations will lay hold on the skirt of a Jew, and say, "Let us go up to Jerusalem with you, for we have heard that God is with you."

The zeal and industry of the authorities of Judah, having once been fairly roused by the fervent energy of the prophets, sustained itself nobly till the new Temple was finished. Four years sufficed for this, so great was the enthusiasm, and so efficient the help from the Persian authorities, after Darius had favoured the undertaking. At last, in March of the year B.C. 516, the sixth year of Darius, twenty years after the Return,

[1] Where the open-air courts of the East were held.
[2] Zech. viii. 18-23.

the sanctuary was ready for consecration, though details in its ornamentation seem to have been added so late as the reign of Artaxerxes, the next Persian king.[1]

We know very little of the building thus raised, after so long a struggle with open enemies, apathetic friends, and meagre resources. It seems, with its forecourts, to have occupied the same space as that of Solomon. The size of the edifice itself, if the measurements given in the decree of Cyrus were followed,[2] was larger than that of its predecessor.[3] A wall of three rows of squared stone, coped with planed beams, enclosed the wide space of the the Temple grounds.[4] The Holy of Holies, which was shut off by a great veiling curtain,[5] was entirely empty, but a point of the natural rock, projecting three finger breadths above the ground, took the place of the ancient ark and furnished a rest on which the high priest could lay his pan of incense, on the great Day of Atonement.[6] It was, perhaps, the rock at present enclosed as the central mystery of the Mosque of Omar.[7] The ark was supposed either to have been hidden by Jeremiah, in Mount Nebo,[8] or to have been carried to heaven [9] till the appearance of the Messiah. The cherubim, the tables of stone, the urn of manna, and the rod of Aaron, were similarly absent—a state of things anticipated by Jeremiah in his prediction, that when the nobler presence of Jehovah was vouchsafed under the regenerated

[1] Ezra vi. 14, 15. [2] Ezra vi. 3 ff.

[3] The only notice we have of the size of the Second Temple, besides the incidental allusions in Ezra, is found in Jos., *Ant.*, XV. xi. 1.

[4] Ezra vi. 4. [5] 1 Macc. i. 22; iv. 51.

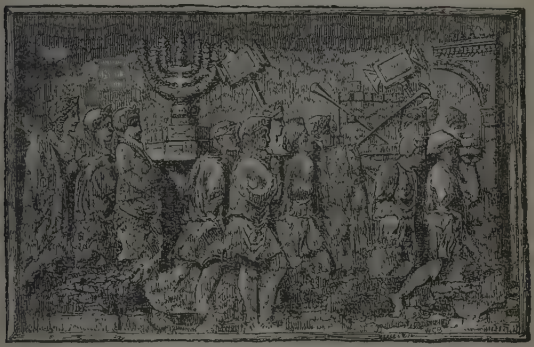
[6] Jos., *Bell. Jud.*, V. v. 5. *Joma*, v. 2. *Riehm*, pp. 210, 1635.

[7] See *Recovery of Jerusalem, passim.*

[8] 2 Macc. ii. 5. *Treasures of the Talmud*, p. 32. This vol. p. 211.

[9] Rev. xi. 19.

Theocracy, men would no longer think of the ark.[1] The golden shields that had hung in the outer chambers were gone, and so was the Urim and Thummim, which the high priest had worn over his official robes. As in the Tabernacle, there was only one golden lamp in the Holy Place, behind the veil,[2] a table of shewbread, and the incense altar, plated with gold,[3] with golden censers, and a goodly array of the ancient vessels of precious metal, carried off by Nebuchadnezzar, but restored by Cyrus.



THE SEVEN-BRANCHED CANDLESTICK, AND OTHER SPOIL FROM THE TEMPLE.—*Arch of Titus.*

There were two forecourts,[4] in the inner of which stood the huge square altar of burnt offering, of unhewn stones[5] —thirty feet each way, and fifteen high, with an approach by an inclined plane. A great bason, for the necessary ablutions of the priests, stood near it.[6] The court was

[1] Jer. iii. 16; xxxi. 31. Only the tables of stone had been in Solomon's Temple. 1 Kings viii. 9. 2 Chron. v. 9.

[2] 1 Macc. iv. 51.

[3] 1 Macc. i. 23; iv. 49.

[4] 1 Macc. i. 38 (48 in Greek).

[5] 1 Macc. iv. 44.

[6] Sirach l. 3.

bordered by convenient store chambers and cells,[1] and by chambers for the priests,[2] the whole being adorned by pillared porches.[3] A bridge led, on the west, over the valley between Moriah and Zion,[4] and various gates permitted free entrance and egress at different points.

In the former Temple, numerous trees, "planted in the courts of the Lord,"[5] had offered a welcome shade to the throngs of worshippers, but none were permitted in the courts of the Second Temple, perhaps from dread of having anything like a heathen grove near the sanctuary. Another contrast was no less striking. No longer its own master, the dependence of the community on a foreign State, was shown in the erection of a military tower or castle at the north-west of the precincts,[6] by the Persian authorities, as a residence for the governor, and, if necessary, a military post. This was the building known during the Roman domination as the Fortress Antonia, the Baris of the Asmoneans. Over the eastern gate of the Temple space another sign of foreign rule was seen, in a sculptured representation of the Persian capital, from which the gate was known as that of Susa. For the first time, also, a space was provided, by cutting off part of the outer court, for heathen proselytes, who, while worshippers of Jehovah, had not entirely conformed to Judaism.

The exact date of the consecration of the new Temple is not stated, but it was doubtless a time of great rejoicing. The priests and Levites in their respective "courses," or successive periods of service, and the people

[1] Ezra viii. 29; x. 6. Neh. iii. 30; x. 37; xii. 44; xiii. 5.
[2] 1 Macc. iv. 38–48.
[3] Jos., *Ant.*, XI. iv. 7; XIV. xvi. 2.
[4] Jos., *Ant.*, XIV. iv. 2. *Bell. Jud.*, I. vii. 2.
[5] Jos., *c. Ap.*, i. 22. [6] Neh. ii. 8; vii. 2.

at large, were at last of one mind in their loyalty to the ancient faith. A sin offering for all Israel,[1] of a hundred oxen, two hundred rams, and four hundred lambs, smoked on the altar, with twelve goats, in addition, to represent the twelve tribes; as if in fond hope that the whole captivity of North and South would, some day, reassemble round the one religious centre.

In due time followed the celebration of the passover, the first after the Return, on the 14th of Nisan, our April, its ancient date; the seven days of unleavened bread succeeding, at its close. No ceremonial laxity was any longer permitted. The priests and Levites, without exception, had purified themselves strictly, according to "the book of Moses." The exclusive right of slaying the paschal lambs for priest and laity alike, as well as for their own order, was assumed by the Levites. Anciently, every head of a family had done so for his own household;[2] at the passover of Hezekiah, the Levites killed the lambs for all who had not legally purified themselves;[3] but from the days of Josiah, the great restorer of Judaism in its narrow sense, and indeed its virtual founder, the usage had been introduced which now became the permanent rule.[4]

From this time, the wide recognition of Jerusalem as the only religious centre of Judaism, and the strictness with which the Levitical precepts were enforced, steadily increased. Not only those who had come from Babylon, but numbers of the survivors of the North and South Kingdoms, whose fathers had escaped deportation to Assyria or the Euphrates, and even the dispersed from other lands, came up to the passover. Scattered families, or small communities, of pure Jews, still guarded their

[1] Ezra vi. 16–18. [2] Exod. xii. 6.
[3] 2 Chron. xxx. 17. [4] 2 Chron. xxxv. 11–14.

separate nationality and hereditary faith in remote and sequestered parts of the land, amidst the heathen or half-heathen population by which it was mainly occupied. Galilee sent up its representatives of the Ten Tribes; the remnant saved from Nineveh. All alike, henceforth, separated themselves absolutely from the heathenism around them, and accepted Jerusalem as the religious nucleus of the race. The envy of Ephraim had departed, and Judah no longer vexed Ephraim.[1]

Such a festivity, so full of hope and so tender with associations of the long past, was a fitting close to the anxieties and alarms of the twenty years it happily ended. Jubilant Psalms, bearing in the Greek version the names of Haggai and Zechariah,[2] embody in the hallelujahs echoing through their successive strophes, the gratitude to Jehovah felt by the new-born nation. All nature is invoked to praise the great name of God, who had "raised up those that were bowed down," and had dealt "with Jacob and Israel, as He had not with any other nation." "Young men and maidens, old men and children," are summoned to unite in exalting His glory, in the old centre of their national religion. The sound of the trumpet, the psaltery, and the harp resounded in the Temple courts, and the timbrel and cymbals led on dances of maidens in the spaces around. It was meet that the formal re-establishment of the Theocracy should be celebrated amidst universal rejoicing.

[1] Isa. xi. 13. [2] Pss. cxliv. cxlv. cxlvi. cxlvii. cxlviii.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### QUEEN ESTHER.

THE interval, from the Return in B.C. 536 to the completion of the Temple in B.C. 516, had been momentous in the great world. In B.C. 529, Cyrus had fallen ingloriously, in a distant war, and had been succeeded by his son Cambyses, whose reign was signalised, at its beginning, by the secret murder of his brother Bardes, and, near its close, by that of one of his sisters, who was also his wife, and had dared to weep for her brother's fate. Determined to reconquer Egypt, his reign was chiefly spent in the Nile countries, till, on his march back to the East, in B.C. 522, he killed himself in a fit of despair, in Syria; remorse for the murder of his sister and brother, the outburst of revolts, and the excitement of his Egyptian campaigns and disasters, having unhinged his mind.[1] During his reign, the colony

[1] Ebers paints his ferocity admirably in *Eine Ægypt. Königstochter*. Like his father, Cambyses was a polytheist. Egyptian monuments show that the story told by Herodotus, of his deriding the Egyptian gods, destroying their images, and stabbing the sacred bull, Apis, was quite incorrect. He is described by the inscriptions of the priests themselves as their friend, the adorer of their gods, and the benefactor of their temples. The very bull he is said to have slain has been discovered, as a mummy, in a

at Jerusalem must have been constantly kept in agitation, by the passage and re-passage of troops along the coast, and by the anxieties of the war. Darius Hystaspis, who succeeded him after a short interval, when the false Bardes, who had usurped the throne, had been overthrown, spent his reign in almost constant wars, to quell the risings of province after province, from Herat to the Grecian Archipelago. In the very year when the Temple was finished (B.C. 516), Babylon had to be wrested by a Persian general from an Armenian prince who had seized it; the Great King himself being in Egypt.[1]

The reign of Darius was, however, especially notable as that during which the great struggle between Asiatic barbarism and Western civilization, after having lasted for generations, was virtually decided. Determined, like Cyrus, to conquer the Greeks, in whose hands in those ages were the destinies of the world, his triumph would have extended the despotism of the East into Europe, and thus the dawning liberty and progress of humanity would have been extinguished in night. But this was settled for ever by the battle of Marathon, in B.C. 490—the Greeks, by their success on that great day, achieving the victory of freedom for all after ages in the Western continent. Modern history began when the Persian hosts were driven back to their ships by Miltiades. Political and intellectual day rose on the world, in these hours; and Asia, yielding up her supremacy to the Aryan races, was finally barred from crossing the Hellespont. The reign of Darius lasted till B.C. 486, and was a time of peace and prosperity to the Jews, though they were

huge sarcophagus of granite, on the outside of which Cambyses kneels before the sacred beast, which we are told, in an inscription, was honoured with due funeral rites, Cambyses himself taking part in them.

[1] *Justi*, p. 55.

still exposed to the intrigues of their enemies at his court. After his death, the throne of Western Asia was held, for twenty-one years, by Xerxes, who renewed the struggle for the conquest of Greece, in which his father had so signally failed. But he only exhausted his empire, for his mightiest efforts to crush the West were shattered at Thermopylæ and Salamis. News of these great events must have been circulated eagerly among the settlers at Jerusalem and in Judah.

It was in the reign of this king, whose name, Ahasuerus, was known to the Greeks as Xerxes, that the incident in Jewish history happened, which forms the subject of the Book of Esther. The Great King was idling his life away in the fortress palace of Shushan, among the cool mountain breezes of his metropolitan province, while his generals and soldiers were fighting and dying for him in the East and West. The story opens in the third year of his reign, about seven years after the battle of Marathon,[1] while the war with Greece, so disastrous to Persia, was still raging. But the majestic empire of Cyrus and Darius still held together, from India to Ethiopia, embracing 127 provinces, and surrounding its chief with almost unimaginable splendour and wealth.

The city of Susa lay about 150 miles north of the head of the Persian Gulf, in the uplands of Susiana, a mountainous region, east of the Tigris. The river Choaspes flowed brightly through the valleys on the east of the city, while the Eulæus, the Ulai of Daniel,[2] with the Shapur, and other streams, spread a network of shining waters round it, making the region a proverb for its luxuriance and fertility.[3] The capital was famous for

[1] Marathon B.C. 490. The reign of Xerxes was extended from B.C. 486—B.C. 465 (*Vaux*), or B.C. 485—465 (*Justi*).

[2] Dan. viii. 2, 16. [3] *Geog. Journ.*, vol. ix. p. 71.

its palace fortress, one of the residences of the Great King; each monarch, apparently, adding a house for himself to the vast piles already built by his predecessors. Huge mounds are now the only relics of all this magnificence, but at Persepolis, in the mountains, about 300 miles to the south-east, the remains of a palace built by Xerxes himself, help us to realize the splendour of that of Shushan. A great platform of hewn stone formed a terrace for the central building, which measured about 350 feet in width and 250 feet in depth. Some of the pillars which bore up its porticoes are still standing, and vary in height from 60 to 76 feet; their whole surface covered with elaborate ornamentation. An immense hall, in which stood the throne, stretched across the front of this central building, while other chambers equally grand, flanked it on either side. At Shushan, the palace stood on a similar platform, forming a square of about 1,000 feet each way, and rising, apparently, from 50 to 60 feet above the surrounding level. The walls of the central hall, which was about 200 feet square, were 18 feet in thickness, and the three great antechambers measured, each, 200 feet in width and 65 in depth. Thirty-six pillars supported the roof, while that of each of the antechambers rested on twelve. But this was only the lower storey. Overhead, the building rose to a height of from 100 to 120 feet, so that it must have towered, in all, 170 or 180 feet above the ground. Spreading far on every side from this amazing structure were gardens, well called a "paradise." Huge four-footed colossi, with wings and human heads, flanked all the gates and doors; and flights of marble steps, the stones of which were of gigantic size, supplied approaches worthy of such a building.[1]

[1] Fergusson, in *Dict. of the Bible. Justi*, p. 107.

Fifty-two years had passed since the Return, when Xerxes, in the mere license of pride and boundless wealth, ordered a series of feasts to be given, on a scale of surpassing magnificence, in his grounds and halls. The table of the Great King was proverbial for its splendid appointments and its luxury. Vast numbers of oxen, game, and fowl, were consumed each day; for not only the king, his court and harem, but his whole lifeguard, consisting of 2,000 cavalry, 2,000 mounted lancers, and 10,000 infantry, were fed in the palace.[1]

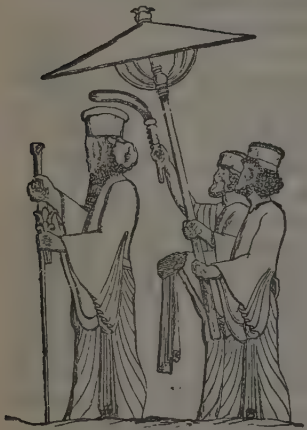
Persian Noble.

Summoned to the great festival now to be held, all the satraps and their subordinates, the chiefs of the Persian and Median armies, and the nobles and magnates of the empire,[2] assembled in successive companies during six months, for so long did the succession of banquets last, each marked by all possible magnificence, to display the wealth and flatter the majesty of the king. Nor was even this enough. The great world having thus been duly honoured, a feast of seven days was proclaimed for all the population of Susa, in the "court of the garden of the king's palace." White, parti-coloured, and purple-blue hangings, held, by cords of white and purple, to silver curtain poles and marble pillars, turned the vast space laid out for the banquet, into a grand open-air hall.

[1] *Herod.*, vii. 40, 41. Duncker, *Gesch. des Alterth.*, vol. ii. p. 609. *Justi*, p. 126. *Ebers* makes the Great King feed 15,000 men daily (*Ægypt. Königstochter*, vol. iii. p. 59). The cost he estimates at £90,000 a day.

[2] Esth. i. 3.

Couches of gold and silver for the guests stretched in long rows, and the ground was paved for the occasion with alabaster, mother of pearl, and black and white marble.[1] The drinking vessels for the throng of guests were each different in pattern from the other, and all of gold; and the wine from the royal cellars was either that of Aleppo, which alone the Great King drank, or of some other famous growths.[2] Precious as it was, it flowed like water; every one could drink as he chose.



THE PERSIAN KING.—*Behistan.*

The Persian kings had always several wives of various grades,[3] including, generally, one or more of their own sisters. At this time Vashti, "the best," reigned supreme as the royal favourite, though probably not a wife of the first rank. To her it fell to entertain the women of Susa at a separate feast, for the guests were too numerous to allow the ladies to sit, as usual, with their husbands.[4] The feasting had lasted six days, and was to close on the

[1] This appears to be the proper translation of Esther i. 6.

[2] The Great King, wherever he might be, drank only the water of the Choaspes, from Susa, ate only bread from wheat of Egypt or Assos, and drank only the wine of Aleppo. This reminds one of that inexpressible imposture, the Turkish Sultan, having water from the Nile carried everywhere after him through Europe, for his baths.

[3] *Herod.*, iii. 2, 68, 69. Darius had six. [4] *Herod.*, ix. 110; v. 18.

seventh. Wine and excitement had turned the brain of Xerxes. Forgetting his royal dignity and that of his queens, he called on the seven eunuchs who waited before him, to bring Vashti, and display her charms, unveiled, before the assembled multitude of half-drunken men. But remembering perhaps, how, in the time of Darius, the Macedonian ladies, introduced to a Persian banquet in the same way, had been grossly insulted,[1] she hesitated to come, alike from respect to the king and to herself. It was enough. Disobedience on the part of any one, to his lightest whim, was not to be brooked. It might be followed by others. Vashti, moreover, had an enemy present—the chief of the eunuchs—who fanned the mad anger of his master. His proposal that she should be degraded, and another queen chosen in her place, was at once accepted.

Among the descendants of the Jewish exiles carried off by Nebuchadnezzar in his first deportation of the population from Judah, was an orphan maiden of Benjamin—Hadassah, "the myrtle," known afterwards as Esther, "the star," perhaps Venus. She must have been very young, for maidens in Persia are in their glory at twelve, and fade by the age of twenty.[2] Her cousin, Mordecai, who treated her as his own child, filled some office in the the palace, and, seeing her beauty, resolved to advance the interests of his race by getting for her, if possible, the place formerly held by Vashti. Introduced to the eunuchs of the harem, Esther spent the usual time of preparation for seeing the king—a year—in the customary training and care of her personal charms.[3]

In B.C. 479,[4] the year in which the defeats of Platæa and Mycale frightened the Persians from Ionia, Esther's

[1] *Herod.*, v. 18.
[2] *Justi*, p. 125.
[3] Esther ii. 1–14.
[4] *Justi* says B.C. 478.

time came to appear before Xerxes, and the result was love at first sight. Adopted as his favourite, the royal crown was set on her head, and she was raised to the position among the royal wives formerly held by Vashti. She had not, as yet, made known her race or family, and was afraid to do so, but a fortunate incident soon made her position secure. A conspiracy of two palace officials to murder Xerxes came to the knowledge of Mordecai, whose duties gave him a place in a chamber of the palace known as the king's gate. Telling the momentous secret to Esther, she warned the king, and thus saved his life, the criminals being hanged.

There was still danger, however, to both Esther and her cousin, from another quarter. Among the dignitaries at the court of Susa was one Haman, according to Jewish tradition an Agagite—that is, of the royal race of the Amalekites[1]—the bitterest enemies of the Jews.[2] He held the great post of Grand Vizier, or First Minister of the empire, but he had a secret trouble which fretted him, even in so grand a position. From some reason,—probably Haman's nationality, or, perhaps, because to cast himself on the earth before him seemed like paying Divine honour to a mortal,—Mordecai refused to pay that honour to the haughty magnate as he entered and left the palace. This affront was so bitterly resented, that nothing would satisfy the Vizier's fury but the destruction of all the race to which his enemy belonged. At one

[1] Esther iii. 1. Num. xxiv. 7. 1 Sam. xv. Jos., *Ant.*, XI. vi. 5.

[2] In the Greek version he is called in one place a Macedonian (Esther i. 19; ix. 24) the Syrian Greeks being the deadly enemies of the Jews when that version was made. The name Agagite may thus only mean hater of the Jews. Elsewhere in the same version he is called Bugæus (ix. 10), and Gogæus (iii. 1), names which are not readily explained. The names "Haman" and "Hammedatha," seem to be Persian.

sweep he would avenge his own personal grudge, and quench the hereditary feud of his race in the blood of the whole brood of the hated race of Jews. Insinuating to Xerxes that they were dangerous, as a people who, unlike the other subject races of the empire, insisted on observing their own laws rather than those of the king, and thus formed a ready centre for revolt, he obtained leave to arrange for their massacre everywhere throughout the empire, recommending his proposal by promising a vast sum[1] to the treasury from their wealth.[2] Fear and greed easily won the despot to the plot. The proposed victims and their property were made over to Haman; as if the slaughter and pillage of a people were a matter to be settled by a light word. To arm him with the requisite authority, he was forthwith entrusted with the royal signet ring,[3] all commands sealed with which carried the weight of imperial orders. Lots, drawn daily by Haman to find a fortunate date for the massacre, fell on the 13th of the month Adar—nearly our March. Royal posts had been established throughout the empire by Cyrus the Great—fresh riders hurrying along all the chief roads, and changing horses every fourteen miles.[4]

[1] Esther iii. 9.

[2] Prideaux, *Connection*, p. 453, says it was equal to £2,000,000, a huge sum in those days. Bertheau thinks it was equal to nearly £4,000,000. *Das B. Ester*, p. 321.

[3] The absolute despotism of the Persian kings is well shown in the following lines:—"The will of the ruler is the will of the godhead." "Well spoken! The true Persian rejoices to be allowed to kiss the hand of his ruler, even if it be stained with his child's blood." "Cambyses has put my brother to death, but I murmur at him for it no more than I did at the godhead, who took my parents from me." Ebers, *Ægypt. Königstochter*, vol. ii. p. 122. Æschylus (*Pers.*, 644), calls the Great King "Persius Susa-born God."

[4] 4 parasangs. *Bertheau.* The Persian caravanserais, or guest-

A decree having been drawn up by Haman to his own satisfaction, the government clerks soon furnished copies enough for the chief functionaries of the provinces, and with these the posts flew along every line of travel. All the Jews were to be killed throughout the empire on the day named, and their property seized for the king.

But Mordecai was destined to counteract this deadly plot. Having heard of it, he forsook his office in the king's gate, and clothing himself in sackcloth—his head strewn with ashes—stood in a public place in the city, wailing aloud, and spreading the news among his people. Lamentation and misery soon filled every Jewish household, far and near. In Susa, itself, the community was distracted. The only hope for the race lay in Esther. Could she venture into the presence of the Great King, and tell the whole story? To go into his inner hall, uninvited, was death, unless he stretched out his golden sceptre to the intruder. She had not as yet revealed her nationality, but it must now be disclosed. Mordecai had told her, through one of her eunuchs, of Haman's perfidy. Would she risk all, to save them? Her answer became a high-souled Jewish maiden. If her people in Susa would fast for three days, praying for her, she would do the same for herself, and afterwards venture her life for her race.

houses for travellers, which were like our post-stations, owed their origin to the great Cyrus, who sought to abridge the vast distances of his world-wide empire by well kept roads. He had also established a regular system of posts. At every station, the postman carrying the mails found a second ready to start on a fresh horse, on which, after receiving the mail-bag, he sprang forward like the wind, to hand his charge to a third postman at the next station. These couriers were called Angaroi, and were believed to be the swiftest riders in the world. Ebers, *Æg. Königstochter*, vol. ii. p. 6., Robinson, *Lex.* s. v. ἀγγαρεύω.

Success attended such self-devotion. Xerxes received Esther graciously. He would give her anything she wished, to the half of his kingdom.[1] But all she asked was, that he and Haman should come and drink wine with her. Her heart failed her, however, when they came, and she had to invite them to a second banquet next day. That he should be thus honoured seemed to Haman to brim the cup of his prosperity. The wealth to be got from the massacre was immense; he had ten sons and he was Grand Vizier of the empire! Above all, he had been invited by Esther, the queen, to come, with Xerxes himself, to a banquet given to the two only. Yet all this was nothing while Mordecai refused to bow before him.

"Let a huge gallows be made—seventy feet high," cried Zeresh, his wife, and a group of his friends, "and ask Xerxes to-morrow for leave to hang the Jew on it." Not falling down before the representative of the Great King, was treason to the sovereign himself!

But his pride was near its fall. Through the night, Xerxes could not sleep. Thoughts of his escape from assassination by the two chamberlains troubled him. The annals of the empire must be brought, to recall the details. What had been done for Mordecai, who had saved his life? Nothing. Almost at the moment when this was discovered, Haman entered the outer hall and asked an audience, hoping to get permission to hang his enemy. Allowed to enter, he was met, as he approached, by the question of Xerxes. "What should be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour?" Naturally thinking the question referred to himself, the answer was easy. "Let a robe of state, which the king has himself worn, be brought, and a horse on which the king has ridden, with its royal trappings, especially the

[1] Mark vi. 23.

head ornament of a royal crown which the king's charger bears,[1] and let one of the noblest princes put the robe on the fortunate man, and having set him on the horse, lead him through Susa, crying aloud, 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honour?'"

What this meant in a court like that of Persia is hard for us to realize. The golden ornaments, the robe of state, and the rest of the attire of Artaxerxes, the successor of Xerxes, were worth 10,000 talents, a sum only to be understood as millions of pounds sterling.[2] The royal dress of Xerxes himself was reckoned by the Greeks as worth 12,000 talents, and this seems not to have been an excessive valuation, when we read the details of the dress of a Shah of Persia even in the present century. "He was one blaze of jewels," says Sir Robert Ker Porter,[3] "which literally dazzled the eyes. A high threefold tiara was on his head, entirely covered with diamonds, pearls, rubies, and emeralds, so arranged that they reflected a splendid play of colours. Several black feathers, apparently of the heron, were stuck amidst the rows of diamonds, their tips ornamented with pear-shaped pearls of extraordinary size. His robe was of cloth of gold, covered, for the most part, in the same way, with precious stones and pearls, and a string of pearls, perhaps the largest in the world, hung round his neck. But his armlets and girdle surpassed all, for they blazed in the sun, like fire. The right armlet was called 'the Mountain of Light,' the left, 'the Sea of Light,' so magnificent were the diamonds in it."

In splendour like this, Mordecai, set on the king's charger by Haman, rode through the streets of Susa;

[1] Esth. vi. 8.

[2] From four to five millions. Plut., *Artaxerxes*, 24.

[3] *Travels* (in the years 1817–1820), quoted by *Justi*, p. 124.

the humbled Agagite proclaiming before his enemy the royal pleasure that such honour should be paid him. The Vizier felt that he was ruined. At the banquet of wine, next day, matters came to a crisis. Esther openly accused Haman, before the king, of a plot to destroy her and all her race. Had she and they been sold as slaves, she said, she would not have spoken, for such an injury was not great enough to disturb the king by mentioning.[1] But the whole race, including herself, was to be exterminated. Furious at the disclosure, Xerxes rose and passed into the palace garden. Meanwhile, Haman, in his despair, threw himself at the foot of the couch, begging his life. But this only hastened his destruction. Caught in this attitude by the infuriated despot, the worst motives were not too bad to attribute to him. An order for his execution was instantly given, and forthwith, as a sign of his condemnation, the guards in attendance covered the victim's head. A few minutes more, and he was hanging from the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai, who was now made Grand Vizier in his place.

It was imperative instantly to counteract the decree sent out by the hapless man. Since it could not be revoked, orders were despatched to every part, that the Jews should stand on the defensive, at the time of their projected massacre. A civil war thus broke out on the fatal day, but the Jews were victorious; 75,000 of their assailants falling throughout the empire, besides 500 in Susa alone. Among these were the ten sons of Haman.[2] No attempt at plunder was, however, anywhere made by the victors.

But even this revenge hardly satisfied Esther. Another day's slaughter in Susa, in which 300 men fell,

[1] Esth. vii. 4. [2] Esth. ix. 12.

was granted, before she felt at ease; and the bodies of Haman's sons, were, at her request, hung on the gallows from which their father was still suspended. It would have been well for her memory had she been more merciful.

That the 13th Adar, on which the deliverance was achieved, and the 14th, on which Haman's party in Susa was finally crushed, should be kept as a double festivity, was natural, and they have been thus observed from that time to this. Even in the text of the Bible, moreover, the hatred of Haman by the Jew is curiously shown, in the fact that the names of his ten sons are written in perpendicular columns, as if to show that they were hung one over the other on their father's gallows.[1]

Nine years later, in the year B.C. 465, Xerxes was murdered by the commandant of his bodyguard and one of his chamberlains, both foreigners, and specially trusted as such;[2] his son Artaxerxes,[3] "the long-armed," succeeding him in the empire—a mild weak man, controlled by his mother and his sister Amytis, both women of a frivolous nature. The murderers of his father accused his brother Darius, to screen themselves, and the innocent blood of the prince stained the new king's accession, but the assassins did not permanently escape detection and punishment.

Over seventy years had elapsed from the date of the Return to the death of Xerxes. Zerubbabel had died—possibly in Babylon, where, according to Jewish tradition, he was honoured as "Prince of the Captivity."[4]

[1] For the mode in which the feast of Purim (the Lots) is now kept, see Geikie's *Life and Words of Christ*, vol. i. p. 225.

[2] *Justi*, p. 124. [3] B.C. 465–425.

[4] Seder Olam, *Ewald*, vol. v. p. 188. *Derembourg*, vol. xx. p. 21.

His descent from David seems to have been made a pretext by the enemies of the Jews at the Persian court for continuous agitation against the enlarging of Jerusalem, on the ground that a revolt might follow, to make Zerubbabel actual king. It may be that this led to his return to Susa; but whether he died in Judea or in Persia, he left behind a daughter and two sons, whose descendants may be traced as honourable members of the community for five generations.[1] The glory of the House of David sank, however, finally in his person; its members, henceforth, living on in obscurity. Joshua, the high priest, who seems to have been in some measure the rival of his civilian colleague, apparently succeeded him as the titular head of the Jewish colony; but, resembling Zerubbabel in having little force of character, like him, he failed to impress his influence on the age. The nominal rule in Jerusalem appears to have been left in his hands, with the nobles and elders as his councillors; but the real authority remained with the Persian governor[2] of the district, who, either personally or by his deputy, took up his residence from time to time in the tower or castle Baris, which stood at the edge of the Temple precincts, and thus overawed both temple and town.

The harsh rejection of the Samaritan overtures to aid in rebuilding the Temple, had borne bitter fruit. The struggle had ended in the triumph of the Jewish colony, so far as the sanctuary itself was concerned; but the decrees of Cyrus and Darius had not included permission to restore or fortify Jerusalem. A constant opportunity for intrigue at the Persian courts was thus always ready to the Samaritans, Idumeans, and others, whose ani-

[1] *Ewald*, vol. v. p. 122. *Graetz*, vol. ii. pp. 2, 115.

[2] Neh. vii. 5; v. 15.

mosity to the Jews grew continually more embittered. An illustration of this yet survives,[1] in a letter to the court of Susa, written during the reign of Artaxerxes, by the Persian officials of Samaria, in their own name and in that of their subjects. Similar communications had been forwarded during this and the preceding reign, but the result in their case is not stated.[2] In the one quoted, two Persian dignitaries—Rehum, the king's councillor, and his secretary, write in behalf of the descendants of the heathen settlers brought to the country by Asnapper—perhaps the general of Esarhaddon, or possibly another name for that monarch, himself.[3] They complain that the Jews were rebuilding the city and walls of Jerusalem, with a view to refusing tribute, and revolting from the Great King. Such a document was well fitted to disturb a court so familiar with rebellions, especially in the past history of the Jews, and caused the immediate prohibition of all further work, at least on the fortifications.[4]

Still the new community made some progress. Houses, better and worse, were raised; the high priest lived in a mansion suitable to his dignity, within the Temple precincts;[5] trade increased; a larger population circulated through the half restored streets. Ebers, in one of his charming books, introduces a Jew as buying horses in Egypt for Zerubbabel;[6] Phenician fishermen had stalls in

[1] Ezra iv. 7, 23. This fragment is clearly inserted out of its place. All critics agree in this.

[2] Ezra iv. 6. The chronicler states that the copy of the letter seen by him was written with Aramaic letters, and translated into Aramaic; the Jewish community using the Hebrew. Ezra iv. 6, mentions a letter written in the reign of Xerxes; ver. 7 one written in that of Artaxerxes; and ver. 8, a third.

[3] See vol. iv. pp. 239 ff.

[4] Between B.C. 465 and B.C. 459.

[5] Neh. vii. 5; v. 15.

[6] *Ægypt. Königstochter*, vol. i. p. 15.

Jerusalem for their catch, and traders from Tyre, booths for their wares.[1] The guilds of the goldsmiths and of the apothecaries were re-established;[2] carpenters and locksmiths had their workshops;[3] masons, of course, were a numerous craft, and other traders of various kinds found occupation.[4] The country round, moreover, was well cultivated, and supplied the market with ass-loads of wine, grapes, figs, grain, and other growth of the field or garden.[5]

The spirits of the colony were, however, far from hopeful. They had expected a vast influx of their brethren, from Babylon and other lands, but had been to a great extent disappointed. There was no sign, as yet, of the wealth of the Gentiles being poured into their treasuries, as had been been promised by Haggai.[6] On the contrary, the walls of their city lay in ruins, and the rubbish of the houses destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar more than a hundred years before, still rose in long-stretching mounds. Their subjection to Persia forced itself on the citizens at every turn. The tribute imposed on them was a heavy burden to a poor community. In addition to this, the establishments of the Persian governors were maintained by requisitions of bread, wine, and money, from town and country, and even subordinates and their servants lorded it over the people at large.[7] Jewish recruits had doubtless been forced into the Persian armies, for all the nations of the empire had to contribute their proportion to the vast hosts of the Great King. Cambyses and Xerxes had both invaded Egypt,[8] passing through Palestine, and the invasion must have seriously affected Judah. The Jewish colony had

[1] Neh. xiii. 15. [2] Neh. iii. 8, 31, 32. [3] Neh. iii. 6.
[4] Neh. iii. 32, [5] Neh. xiii. 15. [6] Hagg. ii. 7.
[7] Neh. v. 15. [8] B.C. 525, B.C. 484.

hoped for great things from Zerubbabel, as a descendant of David, but he had done little to help them, and with his death, the long honoured royal line had sunk out of sight. Phenicia had risen, while they continued prostrate, and boasted its kings,[1] as, indeed, did even the cities of Philistia.[2] Damascus was the seat of a Persian official, superior to the local governor set over Judah. All the ancient enemies of the nation seemed to prosper, while Jerusalem was still partly in ruins.

Under these circumstances, the prophet Zechariah, now an old man, once more came forward to cheer his contemporaries. His style of address had changed with the altered state of affairs. Lands which belonged to Israel by Divine covenant,[3] and over which David and Solomon had ruled, were held by the alien.[4] The seer cared little for the regions not promised in the Law, and leaves them unnoticed.[5] Judah would see the judgments of God on the nations who held her ancient boundaries, and they would be taught, in the end, to seek Jehovah, whom they had so long offended.

1 The utterance of Jehovah,[6]—he says—has gone forth against Hadrach, near Damascus, and will rest on Damascus; for Jehovah has His eyes on all men, and also on the children of Israel, 2 and on Hamath also, at the Orontes, and on Tyre and Sidon—wise though she think herself. 3 Tyre, indeed, built herself a fortress and heaped up silver like dust, and gold like the mire of the streets. 4 But Jehovah will impoverish her, and smite her sea-power, and burn her with fire. 5 Askelon will see this and fear; Gaza also, and will writhe in terror; Ekron will behold it and her hopes be put to shame. And its king will perish from Gaza, and Askelon will be uninhabited. 6 A mongrel

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[1] *Herod.*, viii. 67. [2] Zech. ix. 5.
[3] Gen. xv. 18. Exod. xxiii. 31. Num. xxxiv. 1–12.
[4] Syria, Phenicia, and Philistia.
[5] Edom, Moab, Ammon. Deut. ii. 4, 5, 9, 19. [6] **Zech. ix. 1-8.**

people will dwell at Ashdod, and Jehovah will cut off the pride of the Philistines. 7 They eat the blood with the flesh—but He will take it out of their mouth, and their unclean abominations from between their teeth. Yet the remnant that escapes these judgments will join themselves to Him, and the head of this remnant will be like the chief of a "thousand"[1] in Judah, and Ekron, will be to Israel as the old Jebusites were to the people of Jerusalem—incorporated with them and subject to them.[2] 8 And I (says Jehovah) will pitch a camp round My House, against hostile attacks, that none pass through or return to injure it; no oppressor will assail it[3] any more, for I have now looked into it with Mine eyes.

Not only will Jehovah protect His House; He will cause the Messianic king to appear in Jerusalem, and thence spread the reign of Peace over the world.

9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion;[4] shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy king will come to thee: he is righteous and brings salvation; lowly, and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of a she-ass.[5] 10 And I will destroy all signs of war—the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem, and the war-bow shall be destroyed; and he will speak peace to the nations, and his dominion will be from sea to sea[6]—and from the river Euphrates to the ends of the earth.

Israel will be delivered out of bondage in all lands, and will be victorious over the heathen.

11 As to thee also, O Israel;[7] because of the blood of thy covenant made by Me with thee, I will bring thy captives from

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[1] A clan, or subdivision of a tribe.

[2] 2 Sam. xxiv. 16. 1 Chron. xxi. 15.

[3] Lit., "them." [4] **Zech. ix. 9, 10.**

[5] Bovet's *Egypt, etc.*, p. 273. The Rabbis, commenting on this text, say that the ass will be one of a hundred colours. Barclay's *Talmud*, p. 36.

[6] An indefinite expression. The seas known to the Hebrews (see vol. i. p. 242), were the Caspian, the Persian Gulf, the Black Sea, and the Mediterranean. [7] **Zech. ix. 11-17.**

their dungeon in the dry underground cistern. 12 Turn back to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope! Even to-day I declare that I will repay thee double joy, for all your sorrow, 13 for I will bend Judah for Me as a bow, I will make Ephraim My arrow with which to fill it, and I will raise up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece,[1] and make thee as the sword of a mighty warrior. 14 And Jehovah will appear over them, and His arrow will shoot forth like the lightning, and the Lord Jehovah will blow the trumpet, and will march amidst the storms of the south,[2] from the desert. 15 Jehovah of Hosts will protect His people, and they will devour their enemies before them, and tread them down like stones for the sling, and they will drink the blood of the slain till they shout as if drunk with wine, and they shall be filled with blood as the bowls of the altar, or as its corners, on which the blood is sprinkled. 16 And Jehovah, their God, will save His people on that day, as a shepherd saves his flock, for they are to Him like jewels of a crown, glittering over His land! 17 For how great is their goodliness, how great is their beauty, through the blessing of Jehovah! Rich harvests of corn will make the young men cheerful,[3] and new wine the maidens.

God is the one source of prosperity; the idols are vanity: He will save His people in all their tribes.

1 Pray to Jehovah[4] for rain in the spring time! Pray to Jehovah who creates the lightnings, and He will give rich showers, and grass in every one's field. 2 For the teraphim[5]—the house-gods—have spoken vanity, and the diviners have lying visions and tell false dreams, and give no comfort. Hence the people went astray like a flock, and were in trouble, because there was no shepherd. 3 My anger is kindled against the shepherds, and I will punish the bell-goats,[6] for Jehovah of Hosts cares for His flock, the House of Judah, and makes it like His goodly horse

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[1] Heb. "Javan" = Ionia.

[2] The most terrible tempests (Isa. xxi. 1; Hos. xiii. 15) often accompanied with dreadful sand whirlwinds, like those that overwhelmed part of the army of Cambyses.

[3] "Flourish," *Keil*.

[4] Zech. x.

[5] See illustration, p. 418.

[6] Vol. iv. p. 427; vol. v. p. 401.

in the battle. 4 Out of Judah shall come forth the corner stone, out of him the tent peg, out of him the battle-bow, out of Him every governor.[1] 5 And the men of Judah shall be as heroes, treading down the enemy in the battle, like the mire of the streets, and they will fight, because Jehovah is with them, and the riders on horses will be put to shame.[2] 6 And I will make the House of Judah strong, and I will save the House of Joseph, and make them dwell once more (in their own land), for I have had pity on them, and they shall be as if I had not cast them off, for I am Jehovah their God and will hear them. 7 And Ephraim will be like a mighty man, and his heart will rejoice as with wine, and his children will see it and be glad; their heart will rejoice in Jehovah. 8 I will hiss for them, (as a bee-master hisses to draw to him a swarm), and will gather them, and they shall be as numerous again as of old. 9 I have sown them among the peoples, but they will remember Me in far countries, and return with their children with whom they have lived. 10 And I will bring them back out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria,[3] and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon till room be wanting for them. 11 And Jehovah shall pass through the Sea of Affliction (as through the Red Sea, of old), and shall smite down the waves of the sea, and dry up the deeps of the Nile, and the pride of Assyria[4] will be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt will depart from it. 12 And I will make them strong in Jehovah, and they will walk in His name, says Jehovah.

Unfortunately, the history of Israel was not to realize the conditions required by God for the fulfilment of these promises. The national life was to continue corrupt and

[1] Eichhorn translates these lines "out of Him shall come those who are at the head,—the under leaders,—those who shoot with the bow in battle," etc.

[2] Moses did not allow cavalry in the Jewish army. It would have been of little use in a highland district like that held by the Twelve Tribes.

[3] Many Jews were doubtless still in Assyria.

[4] Assyria is often used in connection with the Persian kings of Babylon. In Ezra vi. 22, the king of Persia is called the king of Assyria.

ungodly. Lawless and tyrannical rulers were still to destroy the common people—the flock of Jehovah—and the end of this would be terrible ruin. Zechariah introduces this abruptly, in the opening of the eleventh chapter, painting a catastrophe that was repeated more than once, by the Greeks, Syrians, and Romans, in the following centuries.

1 Open thy gates, O Lebanon,[1] that fire may devour thy cedars.[2] 2 Howl, O cypress, for the cedar is fallen! the glorious trees are destroyed! Howl, O ye oaks of Bashan, for your fate is sealed, since even the inaccessible mountain forests of Lebanon are laid low! 3 The loud cries of the shepherds ascend, for the grazing places which are their glory are laid waste. Hark! one hears the roaring of young lions, for the thickets of Jordan, their haunts, are destroyed.[3]

The loving care of Jehovah for His people, oppressed by their rulers, is shown in His committing them to the care of the prophet, as a type of the Messiah to come. He seeks to guide them with a shepherd's rod called Favour, and lead them in the paths of right. But their moral perversity makes him at last hopeless, so that he substitutes a staff which he calls Union, the meaning of which he afterwards explains. Love would be tried first; punishment would follow, when love failed to win them.

4 Thus spake Jehovah, my God: Feed the flock doomed to death, 5 whose buyers slaughter them and feel no sense of guilt,

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[1] Zech. xi.

[2] Bleek and some others refer this passage to the invasion by Tiglath Pileser, and think the prophecy dates from the age of Ahaz. But this idea is rejected by Ewald and Hitzig, nor is it tenable, since the invasion referred to, though, like all others, it came from the north, did not waste the southern Jordan as this did. See vol. iv 233.

[3] Vol. ii. p. 388.

and whose sellers say, "Blessed be Jehovah, I am growing rich," and whose own shepherds do not pity them. 6 For I, (Jehovah), will no more pity the inhabitants of the land (the oppressors of My flock, the people among whom it dwells), says Jehovah, but, lo, I will give them up, every one into the hand of his neighbour, and into the hand of his king, and they will smite the land, and I will not save them out of their hand.

The prophet next describes his feeding of the flock, but he speaks, not for himself, but for the Chief Shepherd, hereafter to appear.

7 And I fed the flock doomed to death, the poor of the flock, and took two shepherd's staves; one I called Favour, the other I called Union. And I fed the flock. 8 And I destroyed three of the shepherds in one month.[1] for My soul was impatient of them and their's abhorred Me. 9 Then I said, "I will feed you no longer;" what dies may die, what is killed may be so; as to the survivors, let each eat the flesh of the other. 10 And I took My staff "Favour," and broke it across, to break My covenant which I had made with all peoples, (not to injure Israel). 11 And it was broken across on the same day, and thus the poor of the flock, who marked what I did, knew that it was the word of Jehovah.

12 And I said to them (the flock—not the poor of it only) "If ye think well, give me my wages, and if not, withhold them. And

[1] The three shepherds cut off in one month have been variously supposed to be the kings Zechariah, Shallum and Menahem, of the Ten Tribes; the three kings Antiochus Epiphanes, Antiochus Eupator, and Demetrius I.; and the three empires, the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, and Macedonian. It seems impossible to accept the first theory, from the historical facts of the case; and the others either require the "month" to be taken as a prophetic month of thirty days, each of seven years' duration, or as a general term, for an indefinite period. The fact is, a lucid explanation seems impossible. Thus, Dr. Pusey thinks the three kings mean the "priests, judges, and lawyers," who, having crucified Christ, were destroyed in one month, Nisan, A.D. 33. But how he makes this out is inexplicable to me. The offices of priests, judges, and lawyers, certainly survived the crucifixion.

they weighed out to me as my wages, thirty pieces of silver.[1]
13 Then said Jehovah to me: "Cast it to the potter; [2] it is a goodly price (indeed) at which I have been valued by them!" So I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter, in the House of Jehovah.[3]

14 Then I broke in two my other staff, "Union," to break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.[4]

Having driven the good shepherd, by its wickedness, to give up his office as shepherd, Israel is committed to an ungodly shepherd, who leads it to ruin. Was this the Roman power, which destroyed the Jewish State, after it had rejected Christ?

15 And Jehovah said to me, Take to thee the outfit of a worthless [5] shepherd, 16 for, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, who will care nothing for those that are perishing, and will not seek the scattered ones, or heal that which is wounded, or feed that which is sound, but will eat the flesh of the fat, tearing even their feet to pieces. 17 Woe to the worthless shepherd, who leaves the flock! The sword shall come on his arm, and pierce his right eye; his arm shall be withered, and his eye put out!

The last part of the prophecies of Zechariah is as dark and enigmatical as the rest of the Book, which, as a a whole, illustrates one of the mysteries of God's ways; that such modes of conveying His revelations to His

[1] Thirty shekels were the price of a slave accidentally killed (Exod. xxi. 32), and also that for which a slave could be bought (Hos. iii. 2). For reference to this passage, see Matt. xxvii. 9, 10.

[2] The Targum, Kimchi and Gesenius read, "the treasurer." The Peshito, De Wette, Ewald, and Hitzig, read "into the treasury." The change is made by substituting an Aleph for a Yod in the Heb. word, but it has no authority.

[3] To "cast anything to the potter," seems to have been proverbial expression for treating with contempt.

[4] Does this refer to the terrible outburst of faction and civil war in the last days of the Jewish State?

[5] Foolish = thoroughly unworthy.

Church should have been adopted—modes so hard to be understood even by the prophets themselves. Heavy judgments on Israel are at last to purify it and lead it to God. His people are then to triumph, and His spirit to be poured out upon them, so that they will bitterly repent putting the Messiah to death, and in the end will purify themselves from all ungodliness.

1 The burden of the word of Jehovah[1] respecting Israel. Jehovah, who stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth, and formed the spirit of man within him, saith: 2 Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of confusion to all the peoples round, and that cup will be also for Judah, when Jerusalem is besieged. 3 On that day I will make Jerusalem for all peoples a stone heavy to move; all who try to raise it will be sore hurt, and all the nations of the earth will be gathered together against her. 4 In that day, says Jehovah, I will smite every horse with terror, and his rider with frenzy, and I will open My eyes on the House of Judah, and smite every horse of the nations with blindness. 5 And the chiefs of Judah will say in their heart, "The inhabitants of Jerusalem are a strength to me, through Jehovah of Hosts, their God." 6 In that day I will make the chiefs of Judah a panful of fire among faggots, and like a torch among sheaves, and they will consume the peoples round about, on the right hand and the left, and Jerusalem shall still dwell on her old bounds. 7 Jehovah, also, will save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the House of David and of the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not magnify itself against Judah.

8 In that day Jehovah will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and he that is feeble[2] among them, at that day, shall be (strong) as David, and the House of David shall be as God; as the angel of Jehovah before them. 9 And on that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

But Jehovah will do still more for His people. He will pour out His Spirit on them, and lead them to sincere repentance for their guilt in rejecting the Saviour.

[1] Zech. xii. [2] Lit., "tottering."

10 And I will pour on the House of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplication, and they will look on him[1] whom they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one who mourns for his only son, and be in bitterness for him, as one that weeps bitterly for his first-born. 11 In that day there will be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Hadadrimmon, in the valley of Megiddo (where all Israel lamented the death of king Josiah),[2] 12 and the whole land will mourn, every clan apart; the clan of the House of David apart, and their wives by themselves; 13 the clan of the House of Levi apart, and their wives by themselves; the clan of Shimei[3] apart, and their wives by themselves; and all the clans besides, every clan apart, and their wives by themselves.

This earnest repentance of Israel will lead to a hearty and full regeneration of the people, since God will open to them the fountain of His grace, to cleanse them from sin and to strengthen them to a holy life.

1 In that day[4] a fountain will be opened to the House of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. 2 On that day, says Jehovah of Hosts, I will root out the names of the idols from the land, and they shall no more be remembered, and I will also remove the (false) prophets and the spirit of uncleanness from the land. 3 And if any one still (pretends to) prophecy, his father and his mother, who begat him, will say to him, "Thou shalt not live, for thou speakest a lie in the name of Jehovah, and they will thrust him through for his (pretended) prophesying." 4 And in that day the (false) prophets will be brought to shame, every one for his (so-called) prophetic visions, and they will no longer wear a garment of hair to deceive. 5 But such a false prophet will say, "I am no prophet, I am a tiller of the ground, for a man bought me as a slave, in my youth, to tend cattle." 6 And if one ask him "What are these wounds in your hands?" (He will not own that they are the cuttings

[1] Heb., "me," many MSS. have "him."

[2] Vol. v. p. 275.

[3] The clan of the son of Gerson, the grandson of Levi. Num. iii. 17, 18.

[4] Zech. xiii.

he made in his flesh, in Baal worship and the like), but will pretend that they are the marks of stripes received, when a child, from his parents, who loved him.

The prophet now passes to a new subject—the judgment by which Israel will at last be purified from the moral dross still cleaving to it, and be made a holy people to Jehovah.

7 Awake, O sword,[1] against My shepherd (the Messiah), against the man who is My fellow,[2] says Jehovah of Hosts. Smite the shepherd, that the sheep may be scattered; then will I turn My hand towards the poor (and pious).[3] 8 And in the whole land, says Jehovah, two parts will be destroyed and die, but a third part will survive. 9 And I will bring the third part into the fire, and smelt them as silver is smelted, and purify them as gold is purified. They will call on My name and I will hear them; I will say, "They are My people," and they will say, "Jehovah is my God."

1 Behold! a day of Jehovah comes,[4] and thy spoil will be divided in the midst of thee (O Zion). 2 For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem, to battle, and the city will be taken, the houses sacked, the women outraged, and half the town will go forth into captivity, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. 3 For Jehovah will go forth and fight against these nations, as He fights on the day of battle. 4 And His feet shall stand in that day on the Mount of Olives, which lies east of Jerusalem, and that mount will split in the midst, east and west, into a very great valley, and half of it will move to the north and half of it to the south. 5 And ye shall flee to the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel (close to Jerusalem); [5] yea, ye will flee as ye fled before the earthquake, in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and Jehovah, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him.[6] 6 And on that

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[1] Zech. xiii. 7.

[2] Or "neighbour." The word is thus translated in nearly every case in the A. V.

[3] *Hitzig.* [4] Zech. xiv.

[5] Micah i. 11; called there Beth-ezel. [6] So many MSS.

day there will be no light; the stars[1] will shrink back.[2] 7 But it will be a day known of Jehovah, neither day nor night, but at the evening time it shall be light. 8 And in that day living waters will flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the East (or Dead) Sea, half of them to the Western Sea (the Mediterranean); they will flow both in summer and winter. 9 And Jehovah will be king over all the land. In that day Jehovah will be One and His name One. 10 All the land will be changed and made like the Arabah, (the plain south of the Dead Sea), from Geba (nine miles north of Jerusalem) to Rimmon, far to the south of it,[3] and Jerusalem will stand high, and dwell on its bounds, from the Gate of Benjamin, on the north wall, to the place of the first gate—the Gate of the Corner, (on the north-west)—and from the Tower of Hananeel, on the north-east corner of the walls,[4] to the king's winepresses, (on the south of the city).[5] 11 And men will dwell in it, and there will be no more a ban on it, (it will no more be devoted by God to destruction), and Jerusalem will dwell securely.

While Israel will be thus blest by God, its enemies will be grievously punished.

12 And this will be the plague with which Jehovah will smite all the peoples that have fought against Jerusalem. Their flesh shall waste away while they stand on their feet, and their eyes waste away in their sockets, and their tongues in their mouth. 13 And in that day there will be a great confusion, from Jehovah, among them, so that every one will seize the hand of his neighbour, and lift up his hand against his neighbour's hand. 14 And Judah also will fight at Jerusalem, and the wealth of all the nations, round about, will be gathered together, gold and silver, and garments, in great abundance. 15 And the plague (sent from Jehovah) on the horse, the mule, the camel, the ass, and all the cattle, in those camps, will be the same as that on the men.

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[1] Heb., "The precious things."

[2] The Sept. reads, "there shall not be light, but cold and ice."

[3] Perhaps the ruins "Um er Rummanim," twelve miles north of Beersheba. Josh. xv. 32; xix. 7.

[4] Neh. iii. 1.

[5] Neh. iii. 15.

The heathen who escape these judgments will ultimately turn to God.

16 And it will come to pass, that every one left of all the nations who came up against Jerusalem, will go up (to it) from year to year, to worship the King, Jehovah of Hosts, and to keep the feast of Tabernacles. 17 And on those, of all the families of the earth, who will not come up to worship the King, Jehovah of Hosts, there will be no rain. 18 And if the people of Egypt do not go up (to Jerusalem, to the feasts), on them shall be the plague,[1] with which Jehovah will smite the nations that do not come up to the feast of Tabernacles.

In that last time all Jerusalem will be holy to Jehovah.

20 In that day there will be (even) on the bells of the horses, "Holy to Jehovah," and the very pots (for cooking), in the House of Jehovah, will be pure as the sacrificial bowls before the altar. 21 Indeed, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to Jehovah of Hosts, and all who intend to offer sacrifices will come and take them, and seethe (their offerings in them—so ceremonially clean will they be). And in that day no Canaanite (that is, no unworthy worshipper) will enter any more into the House of Jehovah of Hosts.

Such were some of the discourses addressed to the community at Jerusalem, in the gloomy years preceding the arrival of Ezra from Persia, in B.C. 459 or 458, nearly eighty years after the Return. Couched in a highly figurative style, their deeper meaning is even now very obscure; but their strong and vivid imagery of defeats and plague to be endured by the enemies of Israel, and of the final glory of Jerusalem, saved at last from all its foes, was well fitted to cheer the population amidst its long depression.

[1] *Sept.*

## CHAPTER XX.

### EZRA AND NEHEMIAH.

THE enthusiasm which had urged so many of the exiles in Babylon to seek the land of their fathers once more, had reacted on the far larger portion of the nation, which stayed behind. The Pilgrim Fathers had set out, amidst the profound sympathy of their less adventurous brethren, carrying with them rich proofs of its sincerity. Idolatry was finally and absolutely abandoned in every Jewish home on the Euphrates, as one result of the religious fervour of the time. Family ties linked together the new colony in Judah and those who remained behind, and led to a lively intercourse between the two communities. On the one hand, men from Jerusalem revisited their brethren of the Golah or Dispersion, telling the sad trials in Jerusalem and Judah, and seeking help from rich friends in Babylonia.[1] On the other, not a few journeyed from the Euphrates to the Holy City, to pay vows and offer gifts on the spot once more consecrated by the presence of Jehovah. When Jews in Palestine and other lands, as was not infrequent in such troubled times, were seized as captives or sold as slaves, their brethren of the Golah spared no efforts or sacrifices to redeem or deliver them.[2] Prosperous, and

[1] Neh. i. 2.

[2] Neh. v. 8.

able to help their motherland, these foreign Hebrews were proud to do so. Since Susa had become the residence of the Persian kings, and Babylon had thus lost its importance, many Jews had followed the court, and founded new colonies in the eastern provinces, where numbers grew rich, and some, like Daniel in earlier days, gained official positions under the Great King.

The reaction from their former heathen tendencies was very striking. Face to face with idolatry, they at last acted on the counsels of the prophets, and put away every approach to it in their own practice, devoting themselves to Jehovah as their only God. Their national isolation promoted this great reform, while the still stricter separation demanded by their religion, for its complete observance, increasingly developed this cherished distinctness. Cut off from the Temple and its rites, they grew increasingly anxious to preserve their boast of being "the people of God." Marriage was only permitted within their own race, and the faith of their fathers, at least in its ritual details, became the one rule of their life. They might be unable to carry out the precepts relating to worship in the Temple, but they could observe with the more sedulous care those which bore on everyday practice—the Sabbath, the religious festivals, circumcision, and the laws of Levitical purity. They had houses for prayer, in which they met at set times. Amidst a population speaking Aramaic, they still cherished among themselves their ancestral Hebrew [1]—as the language of their sacred writings. In these they found a worthy object for their freshly kindled religious zeal, cut off as they were from the Temple, its prayers, and sacrifices. The writings of the prophets were their special delight in the earlier years of the exile,

[1] Neh. xiii. 24.

notwithstanding their searching reproofs; for, besides these, there were magnificent promises to excite their hopes and gratify their pride. But, as time passed, the Books of the Law, in their fivefold division, took the chief place in their regard. Given directly by God, their commands demanded zealous obedience, at once to secure His favour, and to emphasize the supreme distinction among mankind which the possession of them implied. A new order of literary men ere long arose, to whom the study of the Law was the absorbing passion of life. There had always been "scribes," as the annalists, clerks, and letter writers of the community; but henceforth the name was virtually limited to those who devoted themselves wholly to the copying or studying of the Torah. Every precept was discussed by these enthusiasts in all its possible applications, that no loophole might be left for even constructive transgression. A beginning was thus made of the vast system of casuistry, which, in after times, expanded into the twelve folio volumes of the Talmud. To guard against the breach of even the most trivial legal requirement, a "hedge" of outlying prescriptions was set round the whole Law. In their puritanical zeal, the scribes were disposed to widen the sweep of every injunction. The spirit of the good king Josiah, the true founder of Judaism, had revived in the early Rabbis of the Babylonian Golah.

It was otherwise among the colonists of Judah and Jerusalem. Some, doubtless, were as zealous for the Law as their brethren in the Euphrates, but very many had yielded to circumstances, and intermingled freely with the families of kindred races in their midst, not a few of whom had become proselytes to the Jewish faith, and lived in Judah and Jerusalem. Marriages of Israelites with women of alien blood, though, perhaps, as a rule,

of a common faith, naturally resulted, and other laxities, such as a careless observance of the Sabbath, more or less prevailed.[1]

This state of things must have been known in Babylonia, though hardly realized to the full extent by those who were themselves so strict. A great reformer, however, soon appeared, destined to bring about a wonderful change.

At the head of the scribes among the Golah, stood Ezra, a man of priestly rank, famous for his knowledge of the Law, and zeal for its strict observance. His ancestry, which he could trace back to Aaron,[2] included a long succession of priestly dignitaries. He was a descendant of the high priest, Hilkiah, who had found the Book of the Law in the Temple, in the days of Josiah, and of the high priest Seraiah, whom Nebuchadnezzar had put to death at Riblah.[3] Hence he stood out from his contemporaries as especially "the priest."[4] But having been born in Babylonia he had never seen the Temple. His priestly dignity was thus only titular, for he was far from the spot where alone he could officiate. So much the more earnestly had he betaken himself to the study of the Law, and so much the more enthusiastic was he for its rigid observance. To secure this, all other considerations had to bow. Intensely earnest, he had the absolute confidence of a zealot in his own definitions of its requirements. To enforce the Levitical holiness of Israel had become his one idea, and no Puritan was ever more energetic or stern in pressing his will on others as that of God. Already known as "the priest," he was even more widely known in his riper years as "the scribe."[5] On

[1] Neh. xiii. 15. [2] Ezra vii. 1 ff. [3] 2 Kings xxv. 18.
[4] Ezra vii. 11, 12; x. 10, 16. Neh. viii. 2.
[5] Neh. viii. 4; ix. 12, 26; xiii. 12, 36. Ezra vii. 12, 26.

new year's day of B.C. 459–8, the seventh year of Artaxerxes "the long-armed," son of the murdered Xerxes, Ezra had made up his mind to visit the Jewish colony in Palestine, and with his usual decision at once sought and obtained permission from the king to do so. His object was to enquire respecting the observance of the Law, as expounded by himself, in Judah and Jerusalem.[1] His own profound acquaintance with it, and his absolute obedience to its minutest requirements were so universally acknowledged, that a school of disciples had gathered round him in Babylon, to spread his doctrine and recommend his example.[2] In his opinion it rose in dignity above all the other sacred writings. Other prophets had received revelations in visions, but Moses had seen God face to face. The Law had come direct from the lips of Jehovah.

Twelve days after his resolution to set out for Jerusalem, he was ready to start, armed with a letter from Artaxerxes, securing him the assistance and protection of the imperial officers, on his journey and in Palestine. King and nobles, indeed, vied with each other to show him favour, so profound is the power of transparent sincerity. Besides contributing gold and silver as gifts to the Temple, Artaxerxes allowed him to accept help from his brethren and others who were friendly. He soon received twenty sacred vessels of gold, worth a thousand darics, or £1000 sterling; [3] and two, as costly as gold, of glittering copper; smaller ones of gold, weighing a hundred talents—equal to £45,000, and others, of silver, of equal weight, that is, worth £20,000.[4] In silver money, alone, he further received 650 talents, or nearly £200,000,[5] an immense amount in those times. Orders on the royal

[1] Ezra vii. 15. [2] Ezra vii. 10. [3] *Riehm*, p. 258.
[4] Kneucker, *Bib. Lex.*, vol. v. p. 460. [5] Ezra vii. 25–27.

treasuries secured wheat, wine, oil and salt, for the caravan, at every station,[1] and he was further empowered to obtain from these stores whatever money might be required for sacrifices at Jerusalem.[2] Special exemption from taxes was, moreover, granted all priests, Levites, and other officials of the Temple.[3] Finally, he was empowered to appoint magistrates and judges in Judah who should secure obedience to the Law, and see that it was universally taught;[4] obedience to them being enforced under penalty of imprisonment, confiscation of goods, exclusion from the congregation, or death, as they, or he himself, decreed.[5] He was armed, in fact, with despotic power to enforce compliance with his religious opinions. Submission to his will was the only protection against the loss of property, or even of life.

The rendezvous for the caravan was appointed at Ahava, on a canal of that name, in Babylonia, and there no fewer than 1,500 men of the better classes pitched their tents on the appointed day—laymen, priests and others. No one of doubtful blood could be enrolled in such an expedition, and hence three days were spent in testing the genealogies of the intending pilgrims. Strange to say, no Levites had presented themselves, nor any of the Temple slaves.[6] A weighty deputation of chief men, with two "teachers" of the Law—members of the new body of scribes—was therefore sent off[7] to a colony of Levites and Nethinim at Casiphia, a place now unknown, for volunteers. The accession of a "teacher" or scribe, and about forty Levites and two hundred and twenty Temple

[1] Ezra vii. 22.
[2] Ezra vii. 16.
[3] Ezra vii. 24.
[4] Ezra vii. 27.
[5] Ezra vii. 26.
[6] The Nethinim Ezra viii. 15–17.
[7] In A.V., "Men of understanding." Ezra viii. 16.

servants[1] was the result. Laity, priests, Levites in the strict sense, Temple singers and guards, and Nethinim, were now ready to start. With women and children, the whole caravan must have numbered more than 5000 souls.

It only remained to commend the undertaking to the care of the Almighty, and for this end a fast was proclaimed. Having told the king that the hand of Jehovah was on all them, for good, that sought Him, Ezra refused an escort of horse and foot which had been offered, to guard the caravan, with its tempting wealth, from the lawless Arabs.[2] The gold and silver, and sacred vessels, having finally been committed to the care of chosen priests and Levites, the tents were struck, and the journey began. The "holy things" were entrusted to "holy men," who were to devote themselves to their charge till it was delivered to the chief priests, Levites, and elders, in the chambers of the Temple at Jerusalem.[3]

Four months and a half were spent in the long march up the Euphrates, across the desert to Northern Syria, and then south, to Jerusalem.[4] "The hand of our God was upon us," says Ezra, and, thus protected, no enemy troubled them on the way.

The arrival of such an addition to their numbers must have been most welcome to the citizens of Jerusalem. It seemed as if, at last, the words of the prophets had been realized. The treasures of the heathen, borne by long trains of camels, were safe in the holy city; and a leader, famous for his knowledge of the Law and zeal in its behalf, had come, with royal power to promote its observance. Ezra must have appeared, to not a few, the expected Messiah.

On the fourth day, the silver, gold, and sacred vessels,

[1] Ezra viii. 18–20.
[2] Ezra viii. 22.
[3] Ezra viii. 29.
[4] Ezra vii. 9; viii. 31.

were duly weighed and handed over to the Temple officials, represented by two priests and two Levites. The high priest Eliashib,[1] however, is not named, as if the stern precisian, now supreme in Church and State, had some reason for slighting him. Great public rejoicings, taking the Hebrew form of a religious festival, with huge sacrifices, welcomed the new comers and their chief, and the commands of the Great King in favour of the Jews were sent off to the Persian officials, and bright hopes and universal enthusiasm prevailed.

Ezra at once took his place as the supreme judge over the community, superseding the high priest himself and all other authorities; but five months and a half passed —from August to December—without any incident of moment. Meanwhile, the new ruler had been carefully noting things around him. With his staff of subordinate scribes, he marked the shortcomings of the community. A copy of the Law,[2] brought by him from Babylon, was the statute book, from which there was no appeal. His ideas, harsh and severe on many points, in the judgment of not a few, must, to some extent, have got abroad; among others, those on mixed marriages, which he fiercely condemned.

Some of the leading men, whether from conviction or policy, were ready to adopt Ezra's views, but there was a strong undercurrent of opposition, which only yielded to compulsion. Those, however, who were at one with him—it may be from conscientious scruples, raised by hearing extracts from his copy of the Law—appeared before Ezra on the sixteenth day of the ninth month (nearly our December), and informed him, with many expressions of pain, that marriages with women of non-

[1] Presumably Joiakim would now be dead.

[2] Ezra vii. 25.

Jewish races had hitherto been common in Jerusalem and Judah, among all classes.[1] The Law, strictly interpreted, was beyond question against these alliances. In Exodus [2] and Deuteronomy [3] such relations with the native races of Canaan were strictly forbidden; but the deputation which now appeared before Ezra, added to these the names of peoples—the Ammonites, Moabites, and Egyptians—not formally excluded from marriages with Israelites, though such alliances with them were condemned in the historical books as contrary to the spirit of the Law.[4] The prohibition quoted could indeed be only constructively applicable, for most of the races mentioned had long ceased to exist as separate communities, having for many generations been fused into the general population of Palestine.

Such a state of things amongst those who had left Babylon to rebuild the Temple, shocked Ezra to the soul. It was no mitigation of the sin, in his eyes, that the question of mixed marriages had always been viewed

[1] Ezra ix. 1. The laity are always put first in Ezra's enumeration of classes. A lesson of modesty to some in our own day.

[2] Exod. xxxiv. 12–16.

[3] Deut. vii. 1–5.

[4] Jud. iii. 5. 1 Kings xi. 2. Neh. xiii. 2. The note of Graetz is worth translating. It runs thus:—As legal warrant for regarding it as a breach of the law, Ezra refers (ix. 12) to Deut. xxiii. 3. But this prohibition refers only to the Moabites and Ammonites. Ezra needed therefore to generalize the transgression, but for this he had no direct authority from the Pentateuch. He was therefore forced to fall back on an indirect authority (ix. 11). This is an allusion to Lev. xviii. 24, 25, and to Exod. xxxiv. 15 ff. since the Canaanitish races and idolaters are there referred to, while the families into which the Jews had married were neither. *Geschichte*, vol. ii. 2, pp. 131. The prohibition in Deut. xxiii. 3, refers to the reception of the peoples named as members of the nation—their being made full citizens.

liberally in the past. Moses himself was the son of an illegal marriage of nephew and aunt,[1] and he had in succession married a Midianite and an Ethiopian, or Cushite. The daughters of Naomi had married Moabites, and Ruth, the Moabitess, had been the great-grandmother of David himself.[2] The hero-king, the idol of the nation, moreover, had married alien wives.[3] King Rehoboam was the son of an Ammonite woman,[4] and the founder of the illustrious House of Jerahmeelites, in the time of Eli, had been an Egyptian, to whom a Hebrew chief had given his daughter as wife.[5] A Syrian mother had been the founder of the great family of Machir, the Manassite, of Gilead.[6] It had, indeed, been impossible, hitherto, to enforce rigid isolation from surrounding races; all classes of the population, in every age, had more or less evaded it.[7]

But the usage of a thousand years was to be abruptly broken off. To Ezra, the "holy seed" of Israel was polluted by marriage with a member of any other race, even where idolatry had been abandoned, and Jehovah was worshipped. For this, it cannot be doubted, was the case with such alliances, in a community like that of Jerusalem, stern Puritans, who had left their native land, Babylon, and all they had, through zeal for God. But to the hard and narrow mind of Ezra, it mattered nothing that the wives of non-Jewish blood were proselytes, obedient to the faith. It was enough that they were not Hebrews of the Hebrews, pure in their descent on both sides. According to him, heathen, who had accepted the Jewish faith, might be admitted into the congregation,

[1] Exod. vi. 20. Num. xxvi. 59. Lev. xviii. 12.
[2] Ruth i. 4; iv. 22. [3] 2 Sam. iii. 3. [4] 1 Kings xiv. 21.
[5] 1 Chron. ii. 34 [6] 1 Chron. vii. 14.
[7] Jud. iii. 6. 2 Sam. xi. 3. 1 Kings xi. 1; xvi. 31.

but only on an inferior footing, as a separate and lower caste. Like the Gibeonites of old, and the Temple slaves, who, though incorporated with the State for more than a thousand years, and Jews in creed, were yet kept distinct and prohibited from intermarriage with Israelites; the proselytes from the peoples round, however high in social position, refined by education, or sincere in orthodoxy, must be kept apart, as a class with which no Jew could condescend to ally himself. Pride of race had much to do with this; but there was, besides, a dread lest close relations with minds more liberal than their own, should lead any Jews to more generous views on points of the ceremonial law than the dogmatism of Ezra permitted. He was, in fact, the prototype of men like Dunstan, or Balfour of Burley, or the Puritans who banished Roger Williams from Massachusetts. Intensely sincere, he was also bitterly intolerant and despotic. His marriage law was at least a straining of that of Moses, and was so impracticable, that the Rabbis themselves modified it in later times. But he was led to it by a fear which the circumstances of the times amply explain. The reception of proselytes or half-proselytes to full and equal citizenship might, in his opinion, corrupt the high tone of the community, by relaxing the superstitious observance of ceremonial details, which his intensely ritualistic mind regarded as the safeguard of the religious life.

To one with views like his, such a state of things as was now disclosed was an overpowering calamity. Even priests and Levites had been guilty of the abhorred marriages. His exciteable Eastern nature was overwhelmed with sorrow and mortification. He had received the deputation in the open air, but now, as the high dignitaries ended their confession, he could not restrain his distress. Rising to his feet, he rent his outer and

then his inner robe, in his immeasurable grief, and, like one all but frenzied, tore the hair of his head and of his beard, till, after a time, he sank silent and motionless on the ground, where he lay till the hour of the evening sacrifice, amidst a surrounding crowd, stupefied and confounded. Then rising from the earth, and again tearing his robes, he strode to the forecourt of the Temple, and falling on his knees before the multitude assembled below for worship, he poured forth his soul aloud, in agonizing prayer, with his hands stretched out to Jehovah. His people, he cried, had come back from Babylon, no better for the terrible discipline. They had fallen again into their old sins, though God had spared a remnant of them, through the favour of the Persian kings. If they again transgressed His Law, by marriages with the peoples of the land, what remained but that even that remnant would be destroyed by the just wrath of the Eternal? Weeping aloud as he spoke, and casting himself down before the Temple in an agony of soul, his emotion spread to the throng of men, women and children, who crowded towards him, to catch his words. That the great Ezra, illustrious as "*the* priest," and no less so as "*the* scribe," but perhaps still more feared as the commissioner of the Great King, with life and death in his hands, should be thus unmanned, implied terrible, though hitherto unsuspected, guilt, on the part of the community, in the state of things that thus unnerved him. His sighs and tears provoking theirs, the Temple courts resounded with wailing.

Ezra was destined to triumph. Among the clans which had, in part, returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel, nearly eighty years before, were the Benai Elam,[1] of whom 1,254 were among the first Pilgrim Fathers.

[1] Ezra ii. 7. Neh. vii. 12. 1 Esdr. v. 12.

Seventy-one more had just come with Ezra,[1] true and loyal worshippers of Jehovah. Overpowered by the moving scene, one of these, while Ezra was still on his knees, after his prayer, broke out into a loud confession of guilt, for himself and his brethren, in the custom denounced. They had sinned against their God by having taken strange wives, of the people of the land. But now there was hope for Israel.[2] Let them make a covenant with their God to put away all the wives, with their children!

Such a proposal committed all present to the course Ezra demanded, without their being heard in self-defence. Seizing the advantage, Ezra instantly rose and, turning to the chief priests, Levites, and laity assembled, called on them to swear adherence to the speaker's words. Nor could they refuse. Their wives and children had done no wrong, and it might have been expected that natural affection would have pleaded in their behalf. But pitiless legalism, armed with the power of life and death, and of confiscation of goods, had decided against them; and in the excitement and fear of the moment, they hastened to clear themselves from a doubtful offence, by committing one that revolts every noble feeling.

The reform thus begun was to be carried to its bitter end. Ezra would neither eat nor drink till he had thoroughly gained the day and bent the community to his will. Like religious enthusiasts in general, he believed his doctrine to be from God, and forgot even his natural wants till what he deemed so mortal a sin on the part of his people was removed. All the population were accordingly summoned to appear in the great open space before the Temple, within three days, on pain of confiscation of all they had, and exclusion from the rights of citizenship.[3]

[1] Ezra viii. 7. 1 Esdr. viii. 33. [2] Ezra x. 3. [3] Ezra x. 8

It was December, and the winter rains were falling heavily when the great assembly gathered. Squatting, in Eastern fashion, on the ground, they trembled, we are told, partly from the cold, but perhaps more from excitement and dread, as they awaited the rising of Ezra to address them.[1] His words were few and to the point. They had transgressed, and taken strange wives, to increase the sin of Israel. Let them confess their guilt to Jehovah, and do His pleasure, by separating themselves from the people of the land and from their non-Jewish partners.

Whatever may have been the private feelings of some in the vast crowd, there was no alternative but to obey. "As thou hast said, so we must do," rose loudly from all. There was no arguing with a man who could strip them of their goods, cut off their rights as citizens, or even take their lives. Besides, had not Ezra assured them that the fierce wrath of God would destroy them, if they did not obey him. But they had still calmness enough to object to action on the moment, in a matter so grave. There were many cases to examine, the weather was too stormy to remain out of doors, and the work too great to be hurried over. A great public assembly was not a fit body to enter into such a question. Let a court be formed in Jerusalem, of the chief men of each tribe, and let all who had wives of alien blood come before it, at an appointed time, with the elders and judges of their respective cities, that each case might be carefully examined.[2] At the moment, four men alone, one of them a Levite, had the courage to oppose the repudiation of women who had married them in good faith, and, as all

[1] Ezra x. 9.

[2] Ezra x. 15. For "were employed about this matter," read "stood up against this." *Gesenius. Bertheau. Keil.*

had thought with due legality; but not a few ultimately refused to break up their homes and turn adrift their innocent wives and children.

A court presided over by Ezra, with the heads of the great clans as assessors, soon completed this questionable reform. In two months, a multitude of blameless women of all ranks were divorced. Among these were the wives of the four sons of Joshua, the high priest who came from Babylon with Zerubbabel, themselves dignified priests; the wives of a number of priests of the clans of Immer, Harim, and Pashur; of Levites, of Temple singers, and of laymen of many different clans.[1] Innocent mothers and helpless children were alike turned adrift,[2] in the name of religion; so unnatural is fanaticism, when it presumes to speak for God. But the transaction did not pass unpunished. The races insulted in the persons of the dismissed wives and children, were ere long bitterly to avenge them.

For the next fourteen years, till B.C. 445, we know nothing of the history of Judah or Jerusalem. In that year, however, a second great personage, destined to exert a lasting influence on the future of Israel, arrived from Persia. The Great King lived during summer at Ecbatana,[3] up in the Median hills, and during winter at Susa, 200 miles south, at the foot of the mountains of Susiana, on their western side, where the warmth of the Persian Gulf was tempered by upland breezes. Here, among the officials at the court of Artaxerxes, Nehemiah, a Jew,

[1] Ezra x. 20–43.

[2] Ezra x. 44. Bertheau, Graetz and Kuenen translate the second clause of this verse "and some of them put away their wives and children." In Neh. vi. 18 we find an instance of a mixed marriage still upheld.

[3] Ezra vi. 2.

held the confidential post of cupbearer, which admitted him to constant intercourse with his master. To hold such a post, implied the enjoyment of the king's special confidence, as only an official who was unreservedly trusted could be allowed to discharge duties so readily

Cupbearers at the Ancient Persian Court.

offering opportunities to a traitor. That Xerxes should have had Esther, a Jewess, as one of his queens, and Mordecai as his grand vizier, accounts for the favour of his son towards Nehemiah. The tradition of the wisdom and fidelity of Daniel, moreover, might well excite a kindly feeling to at least some of the race.

Josephus tells us,[1] that as Nehemiah was walking one day outside the walls of Susa, some strangers, making for the city, travel-worn as if by a long journey, were overheard by him discoursing in his own language—the Hebrew. Nothing touches the heart in a strange land more than one's mother tongue; he went up to them, therefore, and, introducing himself, found they were from Judah. To inquire respecting Jerusalem and its people naturally followed; but the news was sad. The walls of the city had been mostly rebuilt, and the town gates had been set up, within the last few years, but the representations of Rehum, apparently the Persian governor of Palestine, and of his secretary, had led to a command from the court at Susa, to stop the rebuilding of the city and walls at once.[2] Armed with this authority, the neighbouring races, infuriated at the rejection of their friendly offers of assistance, by Zerubbabel, years before, and still more so, by Ezra's recent insult, in sending back to their homes all the wives of non-Jewish race found in Jerusalem and Judea—had attacked Jerusalem, and, after fierce struggles, had broken down the newly restored walls and burned the gates with fire.[3] Nor was this all; the country was pillaged in open day, and many Jews carried off into slavery by nightly surprises, while the corpses of murdered men were often found on the roads. At such a recital Nehemiah broke into tears, amidst which his grief unburdened itself in the cry suggested by the Psalms and Lamentations.[4] "How long, O Jehovah, wilt thou permit Thy people to suffer?" Lingering at the gate,

[1] Jos., *Ant.*, XI. v. 6. [2] Ezra iv. 9–23.

[3] Neh. i. 3. It is most natural to ascribe the disaster to this time.

[4] Ps. xiii. 1. Lam. v. 20. See also Deut. xxxi. 17. Ps. xliv. 24; lxxxviii. 14; lxxxix. 46.

in his sorrow, forgetful of the lapse of time, he was only roused when reminded that his presence was needed in the palace. The king was about to sit down to supper; he must hurry off, to minister as cupbearer. Struck with his dejection, the king noticed it to him, and having heard the cause of his grief, gave him permission to go to Palestine and put right the matters that troubled him.

Nehemiah's own account is, that one of his brothers,[1] who had been away to Palestine, returned with a dismal account of the state of things in the Jewish community there. Like Daniel, Ezra, and other pious Israelites of the Exile, the cupbearer was eminently a man of prayer, and carried his sorrow at once to God, "mourning, fasting and praying for days, before the God of heaven."[2] It was no passing sorrow. The thought of the city of the sepulchres of his fathers lying waste,[3] grieved his soul. For four months—from December to April, (Kislew to Nisan), it lay heavy on his heart. Then, at last, as he was giving wine to the king, who was sitting, according to Persian custom, with his favourite queen, the sorrow that had long clouded a face formerly cheerful, was noticed. The abject terror natural in the court of an Eastern despot, is marked by Nehemiah's statement, that when the change in his looks thus arrested attention, he was "very sore afraid." But his touching answer disarmed suspicion. He was sorrowing over the desolation of the city where his fathers lay buried. "For what then," said Artaxerxes, "dost thou make request?" "So I prayed," says Nehemiah, "to the God of heaven. And I said to the king, 'If it please the king, and if thy slave have found favour in thy sight;

[1] He is called "my brother," Neh. vii. 2.
[2] Neh. i. 4. [3] Neh. ii. 3, 5.

that thou wouldest send me to Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it.'"[1]

Leave of absence for an indefinite time was at once granted, the great income of his office being apparently continued.[2] Letters, moreover, were given him for the various governors of provinces on the road, authorizing his free passage, and requiring him to be furnished with all aids. Orders were further put in his hands for timber from the royal forests,[3] for the city gates, the governor's palace, and the fortress on the Temple hill. An escort of military officers and of cavalry was also appointed him, and thus protected, he passed on to Jerusalem as a high official of the imperial court, taking with him a large body of attendants and personal servants.[4]

That one of their brethren should have received such an appointment was a great event for the Jewish community. Ezra had been a judge and magistrate under the Persian governor, but Nehemiah was himself the Pasha of Jerusalem and Judah, and as such supreme. No inferior officer could have carried out the great task before him. A city without walls and gates, was, in such

[1] Neh. ii. 1–6. The importance of the office of cupbearer, is seen in *Herod.*, iii. 34, where, incidentally, a vivid picture is given of the awful despotism of the Persian court. Cambyses, in mere sport, shoots the son of the cupbearer through the heart, and then asks his father, "if he ever saw a man take a truer aim?" Xenophon (*Cyrop.*, i. 3), speaks of the cupbearer of Astyages, grandfather of Cyrus, as the most favoured of the officers of the palace. It was his part to introduce to the king those who had important business with him, and to keep back such as had matters of less weight. This, alone, must have given him great power. The emoluments, moreover, seem to have been large.

[2] It is difficult, otherwise, to understand the wealth of Nehemiah while in Judah. See afterwards.

[3] Neh. ii. 8.

[4] Neh. iv. 10, 16, 17, 23; v. 10, 14–16; xiii. 19.

times, the prey of every assailant. Zechariah[1] had fondly pictured a time when bulwarks would not be needed; but it was still in the future, and Nehemiah, like all his contemporaries, saw that they were essential to the continued existence of the community. His one thought, therefore, was to fortify the city against all attacks.

The arrival of a Jewish governor mortified the enemies of Jerusalem, as much as it gratified its members. To the dignity and absolute authority of a Pasha, he added the influence of private wealth, which he used with a noble generosity; relieving his brethren of the burden of maintaining him and his court. Indeed, during all his tenure of office, he not only made no requisitions, and levied no imposts for his rightful dues; but, besides maintaining himself and his numerous household and visitors alike, at his own cost kept open house for residents and retinue, and was princely in his general benefactions.[2]

That he had come to promote the interests of his people, was at once understood by friend and foe, but he prudently kept details to himself. It was vital that his plans should not be prematurely disclosed. The first steps toward their accomplishment were therefore taken with all secrecy. In the darkness of the third or fourth night after his arrival—for he lost no time—he started on horseback,[3] with a few attendants on foot, to examine the state of the walls. Descending into the ravine of Hinnom by the west port, somewhere near the present Jaffa Gate, he advanced to the Spring of the Dragon,[4]—a spot not clearly identified, unless it refer to a popular fancy respecting the intermittent flow of the waters of Siloam, at the south-west of the city. To gain this point,

[1] Zech. ii. 4. [2] Neh. v. 14–18. [3] Neh. ii. 12.

[4] Geikie's *Life and Words of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 88.

he had to pass the gate at the south-west of Zion, outside which were thrown the dust and sweepings of the town. He wished to see for himself the state of the walls and gates. Proceeding along by Siloam, eastward, to the king's pool, masses of ruin blocked the way, so that he had to dismount. Pressing on afoot, he followed, as he best could, the line of broken fortifications, till he had made the circuit of the whole city, and once more reached the gate through which he had ridden out on his survey. So secretly had all this been effected, that neither the high city officials, the priests, the great men, nor the burghers, knew anything of it. But, once thoroughly acquainted with the actual state of affairs, Nehemiah forthwith assembled the principal citizens, and announced to them his resolution to rebuild the walls. Nor were they left to question or hesitate. Instant action was required; and the summons was promptly obeyed. The whole wall was portioned off, in short lengths, to different bodies of volunteers, to the rich city guilds, and to wealthy and public-spirited citizens, who undertook to restore them. The enthusiasm of the governor was contagious. He believed that God was with him, and inspired the people with the same confidence. Still more, he informed them that he held a firman from the Great King [1] sanctioning all that he proposed. All classes threw themselves into the work with the greatest energy. To Eliashib, the high priest, and his subordinates, was assigned the building of the sheep gate, at the north end of the east wall. The men of Jericho were to build the piece next. The guilds of the goldsmiths, apothecaries, and merchants,[2] had their separate tasks. The men of Tekoa alone, through their chiefs, ignobly refused "to put their necks to the work of their Lord." [3] The Gibeonites and those

[1] Neh. ii. 18. [2] Neh. iii. 8, 32, 33. [3] Neh. iii. 5.

of Mizpah, apparently the hill Nebi Samwil, north of Jerusalem, though not under the jurisdiction of Nehemiah, but in the territory of the governor of Syria,[1] cheerfully took the share allotted them. Shallum, the municipal chief of one-half of Jerusalem, became responsible, with his daughters, for a piece.[2] Even the Levites had a share allotted them, and so had the priests who lived in the country round Jerusalem.[3] Thirty-five volunteers are named who accepted and completed the parts of the great undertaking committed to them. The municipal chiefs of the second half of Jerusalem; the people of Zanoah, south of Hebron;[4] the municipal chief of the district of Mizpah; of the half district of Beth-zur, north of Hebron;[5] of the two halves of the district of Keilah, in the Hebron mountains;[6] and of Mizpah itself—all helped. Town and country showed themselves alike resolute in the great task. Its distribution into sections brings the ancient city, as they toiled to fortify it, vividly before us, by the landmarks named. The sheep gate, the towers of Meah and Hananeel, the fish gate, the gate of the old city, the broad wall, the tower of the furnaces, the king's garden, the stairs from the city of David, the sepulchres of David and the kings, the barracks of David's "mighty men," the armoury, the upper town of the king's palace, the guard house, where Jeremiah had been confined, the out-lying tower of Ophel, the quarter of the Nethinim, and the higher part of the wall at the corner, successively rise before us;—spots once so well known, but now mere names for well-nigh two thousand years.

The task before the citizens was a heavy one for all.

[1] Neh. iii. 7. [2] Neh. iii. 12. [3] Neh. iii. 22; xii. 28.
[4] Conder, *Handbook*, p. 411. Keil mentions a Zanua *west* of Jerusalem. [5] *Conder*, p. 407. [6] *Ibid*, p. 417.

To remove the mounds of rubbish from the broken parts of the walls, and dress the stones afresh, involved immense labour; for the number of workmen and labourers was limited in so small a population,[1] and there were no funds with which to hire outside help. Everything had to be done by the people themselves. The whole circuit of the walls needed repair or entire rebuilding, and the gateways, when finished, required huge broad-leaved gates, with their massive bars, bolts, and locks. The thickness and height of the defences, and the irregularities of the ground, made the task still heavier. As a whole, the community was in an admirable mood, but the oppressive toil under a fierce sun and with imperfect appliances,[2] soon broke down not a few, even before the rubbish had been cleared away.[3]

Another difficulty was even more serious. While some of the volunteer labourers and workmen were well-to-do, others depended on their earnings, and in the present case, no wages were paid to any one. Many were thus reduced to the direst straits to support themselves and their families, and pay the taxes exacted by the Persian Government. That they did not withdraw from Nehemiah's service and seek remunerative employment, seems to show that they were pressed for the work, as their fathers had been under Solomon, and dared not leave it. At such a time, universal good feeling might have been expected. The simple wants of Orientals are easily satisfied. There were rich men in Jerusalem, and in any Western nation a fund would have been raised by these for the maintenance of their brethren, toiling for the common good. But instead of this, the wealthy

[1] Neh. iv. 2, 10.

[2] Baskets filled by hand are still used in the East, even in digging out huge canal-beds.

[3] Neh. iv. 10.

seized the chance of driving shameful bargains with the starving workers. In spite of the strict prohibition of usury, by the Law,[1] money for food was doled out only in return for mortgages on the small farms, vineyards, oliveyards, and houses, of the peasant labourers, or for the personal liberty of their sons and daughters, who thus became slaves. To get bread and oil, and to pay the taxes, debts were thus incurred which could never be met. Children and land, alike, were virtually lost. Conduct equally disgraceful had been shown to the exiles first carried off by Nebuchadnezzar. Their brethren left behind had bought up their goods and property for a trifle, instead of generously paying a fair value for them, to help the unfortunates in the land of their banishment. Human nature is very much the same everywhere, but I do not remember another instance of such greed of money and meanness of soul as these two cases exhibited. The professions of penitence and reform under Ezra had clearly been worthless in too many cases—mere waves of excited feeling, very soon passing away.

Such heartlessness on the one side, and misery on the other, roused the generous indignation of Nehemiah. Calling together the money lenders, he rebuked them sternly, and then summoned them to appear before a general assembly of the citizens. There he turned on them with scathing words. He, himself, he told them, had, to his utmost, redeemed Jewish slaves from the heathen, but they were buying and selling their brethren. Let them at once cancel all their bonds,[2] and give back the property they had taken, remitting the debts due to them. If they could be paid hereafter, without interest,

[1] Exod. xxii. 24. Lev. xxv. 36.

[2] Instead of "also the hundredth part of the money" (Neh. v. 11), read "remit this exaction of a pledge."

as the debtors were able, let it be so; if not, let them be a free gift. He, his assistants, and his retinue, might demand money and corn, but neither he nor they did so. Let all that was needed be freely advanced to every one now. Would they forget the fear of God, and bring down the reproach of the heathen on the whole Jewish community? Forced by very shame to comply, the offenders consented to follow Nehemiah's counsel, and were bound to their assent by a solemn oath administered by the priests.[1] "So let every man who does not stand to his promise, be shaken by God out of his house and earnings," cried Nehemiah, shaking out his robe as he did so.

The difficulties from without were no less formidable than those in Jerusalem itself. The unwise narrowness of Zerubbabel, followed by the still harsher dismissal of non-Jewish wives by Ezra, had excited a furious hatred toward the Hebrew community. Three enemies, especially, threatened its very existence. The foremost of these was Sanballat, "the Horonite," or inhabitant of Bethhoron, formerly part of the territory of Ephraim,[2] but in Nehemiah's day included in Samaria.[3] His name has been thought to mean "man of Neballat," a village about four miles north-west of Lydda,[4] and about fifteen miles slightly south-east of Joppa, on the western slope of the central hills.[5] He appears to have been the Persian governor of the Samaritan district, or at least to have held some civil or military command. Josephus calls him a Samaritan or "Cuthean" by birth,[6] but, in any case, he was not a Jew. At this time he had no personal relations with

[1] Neh. v. 12.
[2] Jos. xvi. 3, 5; xviii. 13.
[3] *Bertheau.*
[4] Kneucker, *Bib. Lex.*, vol. iv. p. 306.
[5] See vol. ii. p. 415.
[6] Jos., *Ant.*, XI. vii. 2, 8.

Jerusalem; but he subsequently married his daughter, Nicaso, to Manasseh, a grandson of the high priest Eliashib, apparently while Nehemiah was absent in Persia.[1] It is not improbable that he had already risen to be the Persian governor on the north of Judah. Energetic, influential, and keen tongued, he was the leading spirit in the opposition to Nehemiah from without.[2] A second in the bitter triumvirate was Tobiah, an Ammonite, originally, it would seem, a slave,[3] but now in a high position as satrap, or Persian resident, in Ammon, across the Jordan. Such elevations, though strange to us, are common in Eastern despotisms. His fierce opposition to the fortification of Jerusalem excited against him the special dislike of Nehemiah, who seldom mentions his name without contemptuously adding, "the slave." Unfortunately, he had allies of high social position in Jerusalem itself; the stern puritanism of Ezra and Nehemiah being resented by many leading families. Into one of these—a dignified priestly household—Tobiah married, and he was also able to make a similar union for his son.[4] Through these channels he kept up communications with the disaffected party within the walls, and thus, in a measure, paralyzed Nehemiah, by the proof of treachery even among those round him, from whom he should have received the most hearty support. The third open enemy was Gashma, or Geshem, "the Arabian,"[5] who seems to have been chief of the Arabs south of

[1] Jos., *Ant.*, XI. vii. 2. Neh. xiii. 28. *Ewald*, vol. v. p. 213.

[2] Ezra iv. 23; Neh. iv. 2; *Stanley*, vol. iii. p. 133; and W. A. Wright, *Dict. of Bible*, vol. iii. p. 1522, speak of Sanballat as a Moabite, making "the Horonite" = man of Horonaim in Moab. But he certainly would have been called the Moabite had he been of that hated race.

[3] Neh. ii. 10, 19.

[4] Neh. iv. 3, 6, 12, 14, 17, 18; xiii. 4, 7.

[5] Neh. ii. 19; vi. 1, 2, 6.

Palestine, and, as Ewald thinks, possibly the founder of the future Nabathean kingdom. For the time he was an active ally of Sanballat and Tobiah.

On receiving intelligence of Nehemiah's appointment by the Persian court, Sanballat and Tobiah had been greatly annoyed, but they did not dare openly to oppose the firman of Artaxerxes.[1] Nor did they believe that the project of rebuilding the walls, already broken down, perhaps more than once, since the Return, could be seriously entertained by so feeble a community. Mocking its weakness before his officials and the Persian garrison of Samaria, Sanballat pretended to wonder what the citizens meant, to begin such a task. "Will they leave it in the hands of God? Or raise the walls by offering sacrifices? Will they get a miracle done for them, to finish the walls in a day? Will they make the rubbish heaps come out themselves, as if alive?" "You don't need to be afraid," answered Tobiah, joining this ridicule; "a jackal climbing up over any work they may do, will knock it all down"! Taunts and jibes like these stung Nehemiah to the quick. But he was not the man to be turned aside by a laugh. Uttering a bitter malediction on the mockers,[2] he pressed on his task more vigorously than ever.

Thanks to his energy, and the willing zeal of the people, much of the ruins was cleared away, the gaps in the walls filled up, and the whole enterprise well advanced. The possibility of his success was thus no longer doubtful, if his progress could not be quickly stopped by open violence. A league was therefore formed between Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Philistines of Ashdod, to attack Jerusalem, and destroy what had been done. But Nehemiah, well served by

[1] Neh. ii. 10. [2] Neh. iv. 4-6.

his spies, posted sentinels and pickets, and "made prayer to God," and urged on the builders. It was the crisis of the undertaking. So many workmen being withdrawn to furnish guards, day and night, the officials had at last to report that the toil of clearing away the mounds of rubbish, to let the masons get to work, and of carrying the stones for them, had completely worn out the labourers, and that the building of the wall must stop. Meanwhile, Jews from the country districts disclosed the power of the enemy and their threatening designs, and urged their brethren from different localities to return home.[1] The foe, it was said, would burst upon them suddenly, and put an end to the work by a general massacre. But Nehemiah was not to be daunted. Summoning all the men able to bear arms, and giving them swords, spears, and bows, he set them in such open spaces behind the walls as were weakest. They could thus guard the most dangerous spots, and while at once seeing the approach of the enemy, also show that they were prepared for him.[2] Nor did he omit stirring appeals to all, to fight manfully for hearth and altar. Such vigour had the success it deserved. The allies soon heard of the measures taken to baffle them, and, seeing their plans discovered, disbanded their men. But there was no relaxation of vigilance on the part of Nehemiah. Half of the people were kept at the building of the walls, from the earliest dawn till the appearing of the stars,[3] their swords at their side and their spears near at hand, while the other half, fully armed, kept watch behind, their leaders with them; Nehemiah, ever wakeful, and everywhere present, having a trumpeter

[1] I have incorporated the renderings of Neh. iv. 12, given by Herzfeld, Bertheau, and Keil.

[2] Neh. iv. 13. [3] Neh. iv. 21. *Heb.*

at his side, to sound an alarm on the instant, if needed. At night only a portion of the guard remained on duty, the rest taking sleep, to be ready for the next day. Neither Nehemiah, however, nor his household, nor body-guard, ever took off their clothes.[1]

Fired by such enthusiasm "the people had a mind to work," and the walls rapidly drew near completion. It only remained to hang the great two-leaved doors in the gate-spaces. Sanballat and Tobiah, hitherto foiled, determined, therefore, to make a last effort to effect their purpose. Pretending to wish a conference with Nehemiah, they invited him to come out to them, to Ono —the present village of Ana—on the Maritime Plain, about thirty miles north-west of Jerusalem,[2] their object being to take him prisoner. This transparent device was repeated four times, but the only answer given by Nehemiah was that he could not allow the work to cease by any such visit. An open letter from Sanballat, pretending a friendly interest in the governor, was the next scheme. Rumours were everywhere afloat, he said, that rebellion against Persia was intended, Nehemiah himself designing to be proclaimed king, as soon as the walls were finished. Prophets, the letter went on, had been appointed by him to prepare the people for this. It was desirable, therefore, that he should come out and consult with Sanballat. But he was too shrewd to be thus easily trapped. There was no truth, he said, in the alleged reports. They were only inventions. He would not come.

Yet there was much to make a less earnest man blench in his purpose. Traitors were busy within the city. A number of prophets, and even a prophetess, Noadiah, had been bribed by Sanballat and Tobiah, to stir up

[1] Neh. iv. 23. [2] Conder and Kiepert's Map.

discontent among the citizens and hamper Nehemiah.[1] Some of the chief citizens, moreover, influenced by Tobiah's marriage connections,[2] kept up an active correspondence with him, sending him letters and receiving replies.[3] Every word of Nehemiah was reported to the enemy.[4] One treacherous prophet, shutting himself up in his house, as if in terror of his life, warned the governor that he knew of his murder in the night being determined, and urged that the two should retire into the Holy Place of the Temple for security, and shut the doors. But this scheme also failed. "Should a man in his position flee?" replied Nehemiah. Moreover, the Holy Place was not to be entered by a layman. How could he, therefore, enter it and live? He would not go.[5]

The walls having at last been finished, the gates set up, and a body of guards for them and those of the Temple duly organized,[6] Nehemiah appointed his brother Hanani, and a trusted and devout officer named Hananiah, the commandant of the Persian fortress at the north edge of the Temple precincts, as joint prefects of the city. In ordinary times the Temple guards alone protected the sanctuary and its grounds, opening and closing the gates. But at such a crisis, the singers and

[1] Neh. vi. 14.

[2] Neh. vi. 18. Of these Shecaniah was a prominent man of the great family of Arah (Ezra ii. 5). Meshullam (Neh. iii. 4–30) was one of the helpers in repairing the walls. Eliashib, the high priest, was also allied to Tobiah (Neh. xiii. 4). Tobiah means "pleasing to Jehovah." His son's name, Johanan means "given by Jehovah," so that it is the equivalent of Theodore. They were probably Israelites of one of the Ten Tribes, but had apparently been settled, perhaps for generations, in Ammon (Neh. ii. 10).

[3] Neh. vi. 17. [4] Neh. vi. 19.

[5] Neh. vi. 10–12. For "to save his life," read "and live."

[6] 1 Chron. ix. 17–27; xxvi. 12–19.

the Levites were told off to strengthen them. Orders were further issued, that the gates of the city were not to be opened till the sun was high, and the day warders had mounted guard, in place of those who had been on duty through the night. They, in their turn were to be relieved, after the gates were closed and barred at sunset. The citizens, moreover, were required to patrol the town as night watchmen, each in his own quarter.[1]

A serious difficulty, however, still remained. The circuit of the walls was great, but the houses within were few and sparse, so that great vacant spaces of ruins separated the small population and weakened their powers of defence. The prudent governor, therefore, resolved to increase the number of citizens, by transferring families from the country to Jerusalem, that their dwellings might fill up the unsightly gaps in the streets, and the number of burgesses able to man the walls be effectively increased.

A public register of the whole Jewish community in the land, carefully drawn up under Zerubbabel, afforded a trustworthy basis for the projected measure. To make it complete, an assembly of the people was summoned, that all who had joined the colony since Zerubbabel's census might be added to it.[2] The time chosen was the seventh month—part of our September and October—the same month as that in which the great public assembly had been held, years before, to consecrate the new altar, and restore the long interrupted sacrifices.[3] On the present occasion, however, it was determined to take advantage of the gathering of the people, for other weighty national objects. Besides the

[1] Neh. vii. 3.

[2] Neh. vii. 5. Nehemiah gives the register taken at first in vii. 5–73. Ezra ii.

[3] Ezra iii. 1.

filling up of the family registration, various measures of the highest importance demanded action.

The Puritan fervour which had led to the Return, though it had lost much of its deep religious feeling, still continued in all its intensity as a national sentiment. The cessation of Temple worship during the Exile, and the abhorrence of idolatry brought about by the prophets, turned attention more than ever before to the sacred writings of the race. The Law was already the object of superstitious veneration; the Temple and its sacrifices taking only a second place in the public regard. Schools for its study, established by Ezra and his disciples, had spread widely in Babylon. The new order of scribes were unceasing in their efforts to indoctrinate the whole people with what they believed to be its teaching. It was resolved, therefore, that at this first public gathering of Judah, after the restoration of the city walls, the reading and exposition of the Law should have the first place. The people themselves desired it. To attract every one, a great feast was appointed to be held for the solemn dedication of the newly built city walls. On the day fixed, the whole population assembled at Jerusalem, even the women leaving their wonted seclusion, and bringing their children with them. Before the festival opened, however, a request was formally made through the elders, that the Law might be read aloud to the whole assembly, by Ezra and his assistants.[1] All were intensely anxious to hear the words that God had spoken from the Mount to their fathers.

The request was too thoroughly gratifying to the Reformer to be for a moment denied. The open space before the water gate, on the south-east of the Temple, was appointed for the solemn gathering, and thither,

[1] Neh. viii. 3.

at the time fixed, Ezra and his colleagues presented themselves. A pulpit—the first of which we know—had been erected for them, that they might be the better heard, and on this Ezra took his place in the early morning[1] of the day of the seventh new moon—famous from of old for its feast of trumpet-blowing, as specially holy,[2] and from the remotest times a season of holy assembly and cessation of work. Thirteen priests stood around him, as he unrolled from right to left a long scroll of the Law brought with him from Chaldea. The multitude, till then sitting, in Eastern fashion, on the ground, instantly rose at the sight of the Sacred Book, and stood reverently to hear its words. Prayer fitly opened a service so holy, the voice of Ezra first breaking the silence by "blessing Jehovah, the great God." An ancient psalm appears to have supplied the words—during the utterance of which the people joined in adoration, with uplifted hands and loud Amens, bowing their heads, and worshipping with their faces to the earth, at each pause and at the close. Ezra then read a portion of the Law, after which a body of thirteen Levites, skilled in its exposition, as disciples of the great scribe, explained its meaning[3] to the vast crowd, amidst which

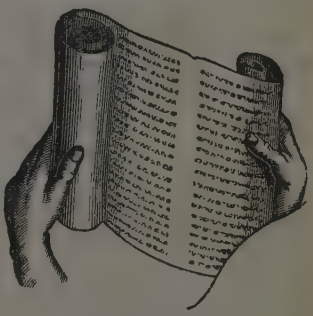
Bowing the Head.

[1] From the dawn, or "light." Neh. viii. 3.

[2] Lev. xxiii. 22–25. Num. xxix. 1–6.

[3] Expanding and simplifying the words. Vitringa, *De Synag. Vet.*, p. 420.

they were apparently stationed at various points.[1] A second portion was then read by Ezra, followed by a second explanation,[2] and thus the time passed, from sunrise till the fierce midday heat compelled a temporary cessation. Nothing could exceed the deep attention of the people. For at least six hours they stood with covered heads, eagerly listening to Ezra, and to the scribes who commented on the sacred text he read.[3] The excitement was intense. In past ages their fathers had neglected the holy words spoken to the nation by God, or written by His inspiration, and this had brought on them all the misery of Assyrian and Babylonian slavery. Henceforward there should be no such terrible mistake. The Temple and its services might still be dear to them, but not more so than the knowledge and observance of the Law. The scribes became from this time the foremost body in the land. It had hitherto boasted of its Temple: it would henceforth boast also of the Torah. Modern history offers as the most vivid parallel to the scene, the eagerness of England or Germany for the Scriptures in the sixteenth century, when



ROLL OF A BOOK.

[1] Neh. viii. 4–7.

[2] Neh. viii. 8.

[3] Vitringa says it had always been the custom to stand during the reading of the Law, but this is not stated in Scripture. *De Synag. Vet.*, p. 167.

they were restored by the Reformers to their rightful place in the Church, after the neglect of centuries.

The contrast between their own practice and the requirements of the Law, as laid down by the scribes, alarmed all. It seemed as if calamities like those from which they had suffered in the past, must visit them again for their shortcomings. Far and near rose loud weeping. Confessions and lamentations filled the air. But it was no time for sorrow; that would come after. It was a day holy to Jehovah; there must be no tears to mar its joy. Nehemiah, Ezra and the Levitical Rabbis, his colleagues, alike protested against any sadness. They must rather hold a festival, and eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions to them who had none.

The next day saw the chiefs of clans, the priests, and Levites, collected round Ezra for a further study of the Law. The portion read included the account of the Feast of Tabernacles,[1] with its preparation of booths of twigs and branches. It was the very time for this great festival being held. They would forthwith celebrate it with all exactness. Orders were, therefore, sent through the whole country, that the people should gather from the hill sides, branches of olives, oleasters or wild olives, and myrtles, and palms, and bring them to Jerusalem, to make the booths required. Originally commemorating the wilderness life in tents, it had become, in later times, the great harvest festival of the year, to express the national gratitude to Jehovah for His bounty in creating for man, once more, the fruits of the earth. The enthusiasm was boundless. Huts were raised everywhere; on the flat roofs, in the courts of the houses, in the Temple precincts, and in the vacant spaces before the city gates. The feast had been celebrated at the con-

[1] Lev. xxiii. 39–43.

secration of Solomon's Temple,[1] and in the first year of the Return[2] but never so exactly, in all its legal details, or so universally, since the time of Joshua.[3]

Its successive days passed amidst high rejoicing; the mornings devoted to hearing more of the Law read by Ezra; the rest of the day to festivities. At last, after a week of gladness, it closed with a solemn assembly of the whole people, all work ceasing and solemn sacrifices being offered.[4]

The people were not, however, allowed to separate without a formal renewal of the covenant with Jehovah, so often made before by their fathers. Two days after the close of the feast,[5] a solemn fast was held; the multitude assembling, clad in sackcloth, with earth on their heads, as a sign of mourning. Once more, portions of the Law were read aloud, but only for three hours, not as hitherto, for six. Public confession by all, of their sins and the sins of their fathers, succeeded. This ended, the scribes ascended a special platform erected for them,[6] and opened the service of the day by "crying with a loud voice to Jehovah, their God." The vast assembly was then summoned to rise from the ground and praise the Lord in a triumphal chant, led, no doubt, by the Levitical choir and musicians. One of the leaders, probably Ezra, now led the multitude in prayer, recounting the wonderful ways of God to His people in the past, their hardness of heart, His pitying mercy, their frequent apostasy and just punishment. They were slaves in the land promised to their fathers. It yielded a large revenue to the kings (of Persia) whom God had set over them for their sins. These potentates indeed, he continued,

[1] 2 Chron. vii. 9. 1 Kings viii. 65. [2] Ezra iii. 4.
[3] Neh. viii. 17. [4] Neh. viii. 18. Lev. xxiii. 36.
[5] Neh. x. 1. [6] Neh. ix. 4.

did as they pleased, not only with the produce of the soil, but with the population at large, taking them at their will to serve in their wars, and carrying off their cattle for their baggage waggons and for food, so that the land was in great distress. All this humiliation and misery was the just punishment for having forsaken Jehovah. The whole people must, therefore, once more solemnly renew their covenant to serve Him, and Him only, that He might send them prosperity.

A formal document had been prepared, binding all henceforth to fidelity to the national faith, and to this the leaders of the community forthwith appended their signatures, beginning with Nehemiah as the head of the little state. Princes, Levites, priests, and the chiefs of the clans and sub-clans, as representatives of the people, followed. The whole assembly, moreover, took an oath to obey the Law of Moses—people, priests, Levites, the guard of the Temple gates, the singers, the Nethinim, or Temple slaves. Many descendants of the Hebrews, left in Palestine at the time of the Captivity, took this opportunity to unite themselves formally with Judah, definitely separating from all such relations to the heathen population of the country, as compromised their ceremonial or legal purity.

The covenant thus adopted with a solemn oath, which was heightened by a curse on its transgression, embodied the strict views of the Law advanced by Ezra and his colleagues. No intermarriage with non-Israelites was to be tolerated. No purchases were to be made on a Sabbath or holy day, and on these seasons no goods or provisions were to be exposed for sale by the heathen traders from outside. The land was, further, to be left fallow on the seventh year, as commanded in Exodus,[1]

[1] Exod. xxiii. 10.

and all debts were to be then remitted. That year, was, in fact, to limit the claims of a creditor. In Exodus [1] it had been ordained that a voluntary tax of half a shekel should be paid yearly by every Israelite over twenty, for the support of the Temple; it was now enacted that this tax should, henceforward, be carefully levied, but in consideration of the general poverty, its amount was reduced from a half to the third of a shekel.[2] The funds thus secured were to provide for the shew-bread, the meal offerings, and burnt offerings—including those on the Sabbaths, new moons, and periodical feasts—and also for thank offerings presented in the name of the congregation, and public trespass offerings, with other expenses of the Temple. Moreover, to secure a regular supply of wood proper for the altar, the priests, Levites, and people, were assigned their respective turns in bringing it to the Temple. Similar arrangements were also made for bringing thither the first fruits of the soil and of fruit trees,[3] for presenting firstborn sons [4] and the firstborn of cattle, that they might be redeemed [5] and for sending in the firstlings of sheep and goats, the fat of which was to be burnt on the altar, while the flesh went to the priests.[6] Measures were also taken for the payment of the first fruits of coarse meal [7] and heave offerings of wheat and barley [8] and of other fruits and produce, including wine and oil.[9] These were all to be brought to the priest, that they might be stored in the proper chambers in the Temple precincts, whence they were to be served out to the priests, for their support.

[1] Exod. xxx. 13.
[2] Still paid in the time of Christ. Matt. xvii. 24.
[3] Exod. xxiii. 19; xxxiv. 16. Deut. xxvi. 2. [4] Num. xviii. 16.
[5] Exod. xiii. 12. Num. xviii. 15. [6] Num. xviii. 17.
[7] Num. xv. 20. [8] Exod. xlv 13. [9] Num. xviii. 12.

In the same way the tithes were to be brought in for the sustenance of the Levites on duty in Jerusalem, members of the order in country towns being cared for from the same source, by other arrangements. To secure exactness, a priest was to attend, with a Levite, when these payments were delivered, and was to see that a tenth of all tithes was handed over to the priests as a body, to supplement their other revenues. Similarly, the people and the Levites were to deliver at the Temple all heave offerings of grain, wine, and oil, to be put away in the sacred storehouses; since the priests, Temple guards, and singers, for whose sustenance they were in a measure to serve, were employed in the holy bounds, and the sacred vessels in which part of them was to be offered, were also kept in the Temple.

Such was the covenant now entered into by the whole community. In former times, similar transactions had exclusively referred to general fidelity to Jehovah; the minuteness with which the interests of the Temple, the priests, the Levites, and all the Temple officials, were now guarded, marked the overpowering influence and authority of Ezra, and the different spirit of the age.

These matters being settled, the way was at last clear[1] to carry out the change already projected, of transplanting part of the country population to Jerusalem, to add to its dignity, and guard it against surprise by providing a sufficient force of men able to bear arms, for its defence. The delay had been caused by the determination that only families of pure Jewish blood should be allowed to become citizens. The prophets had continually dwelt on this as a characteristic of the holy city[2]

[1] Neh. xi.

[2] Joel iii. 17. Isa. xxxv. 8; lii. 1. Nah. i. 15. Zech. xiv. 21, etc.

in the Messianic times, and Ezra and Nehemiah were only too eager to secure the fulfilment of such predictions. The genealogies of the whole community throughout the country required strict examination, to secure a complete list of all who were of unblemished Hebrew descent. This having been obtained after much labour, lots were cast by all the rural population, and every tenth family thus selected, was required to break up its home and remove permanently to Jerusalem. Some, however, it would seem, on whom the lot fell, were unwilling to go, but the greater number cheerfully acquiesced in the change of home demanded, their ready loyalty to the capital gaining them the plaudits of the people at large. Such of the Nethinim and the descendants of Solomon's slaves as did not already live in Jerusalem, appear to have been transplanted from the country at the same time, to the suburb of Ophel, south of the Temple, but a great number of priests and Levites were allowed to remain in different towns, where portions of land had been assigned them.[1] Yet, amidst all these changes, signs of the national subjection remained on every hand; for Levites, singers, and people, had each an official set over them, to watch after the interests of the Persian king.[2]

It only now remained, to dedicate with fitting solemnity, the city walls—raised amidst so much opposition, with so loyal a devotion. To make the ceremony more imposing, messengers were sent through the land to bring to Jerusalem all the Levites—the ordinary ministers of the Temple—the musicians, with their cymbals, harps, and lyres, and the singers, in their three great divisions.[3] These last had to be summoned from the "circle" of the Jordan round Jericho, from Netopha, fifteen miles

[1] Neh. xi. 20. [2] Neh. xi. 24. [3] Neh. xii. 24.

south of Jerusalem, from Beth Gilgal, eighteen miles, and from Geba, seven miles north of it, and from Azmaveth, a place now unknown. Open villages had been built by the different choral fraternities in these districts, which lay near enough to Jerusalem to make their periodical attendances in the Temple easy. In further preparation for the great event the Levites, now minutely strict in their rites, on their arrival in the holy city, purified not only themselves, but the people, the gates, and the walls, by sacrifices, that no ceremonial shortcoming in the least detail might lessen the sacredness of the proceedings.

On the appointed day, Nehemiah himself took the lead in the great celebration. The broad top of the walls—built on a scale to allow fighting men to occupy them in case of a siege—was fitly chosen for the scene of an impressive display. Assembling the chiefs of the priestly clans, the Levites, and the people, he marshalled them in two great divisions, which advanced in opposite directions, to meet at the open space of the Temple precincts after going round the circuit of the walls. At the head of the one walked Nehemiah, at that of the other Ezra, the two leaders of the community. A great choir, giving thanks, and praising and blessing God with songs and melodious music, followed in each procession. The chiefs of the priests, the Levites, and the laity came next—the priestly order in two selected divisions. Then followed other notable laymen of Judah and Benjamin. Behind these walked two other bodies of priests, blowing the sacred trumpets.[1] Then came a body of Levite singers and musicians, the latter with the instruments known as invented or introduced by David. All marched in their robes and vestments, or festive

[1] Neh. xii. 41.

apparel, filling the air with loud rejoicings, till the two processions met at last in the open space before the Temple. There the whole participants in both united in a chorus of praise and thanksgiving, the voices of the singers rising loud and clear above the harps and cymbals.[1] Then followed great sacrifices, offered by the priests on the huge altar before the Holy Place in the Temple, and with this the solemnities closed. The people were beside themselves for joy, their loud cries of gladness filling the air, even to the distant surrounding hills.

[1] Neh. xii. 42.

# CHAPTER XXI.

## THE PROPHET MALACHI.

THE great Dedication Festival of the new walls of Jerusalem is the last incident recorded of the first period of Nehemiah's governorship. After he had been twelve years absent from Persia, the wear of mind and body told on him, and a temporary furlough, during which he could return to his royal master at Ecbatana, or Shushan, and render an account of his high trust, was desirable. Everything appeared to be quiet and safe in Judah; the walls of Jerusalem were built, the city increasingly prosperous from the late addition to its population, the Temple worship established in ceremonial completeness, and the people pledged by solemn covenant to uphold it. They had even gone further. Public readings of the Law, which afterwards developed into the great institution of the synagogue, had become a fixed custom; and after one of these the people had voluntarily abjured any close relations with neighbours of heathen descent, including Ammonites and Moabites,[1] as if desirous of showing their fidelity to all Levitical requirements. Nehemiah had no sooner left for Persia, however, than the worthlessness of these professions

[1] Neh. xiii. 1. Deut. xxiii. 4. Num. xxii. 2.

became only too apparent. In spite of the presence of Ezra in Jerusalem, it was seen that a reformation enforced by the civil power, rather than the fruit of individual conviction, had no permanent vitality. The tithes due to the Temple, the Levites, and the priests, were not delivered, and the greatest distress was thus caused to all who depended on them for maintenance. The choristers, the guards of the gates, and the ordinary Levites, alike, were compelled to go back to their homes and cultivate their fields for a living. Public worship was thus interrupted, and the Temple, forsaken by its ministers, was neglected by the people.[1] Nor was the refusal to pay tithes the only sign of an altered spirit among the people. The Sabbath was profaned, both in town and country; winepresses were busy in its sacred hours, and the roads and fields dotted with the workers taking sheaves to the barn on their heavily-laden asses. Jerusalem itself was disturbed by a Sabbath fair, to which loads of wine, grapes, figs, and much else were carried in during the sacred hours. Phenician fishermen exposed for sale their catch off the coasts, and traders from Tyre displayed their countless wares. After all the professed zeal to put an end to mixed marriages, things were rapidly drifting to almost a worse condition than of old. Not a few husbands deserted their Jewish wives for Philistine, Ammonite, or Moabite women;[2] and the children of these marriages had already shown by their broken dialect—half Philistine, half Hebrew—how soon they would cease to take pride in anything Jewish. The very priests had rapidly lost their high tone. Their irreverence, indifference, and worldliness, shocked the thoughtful.[3] Monied men once more

[1] Neh. xiii. 10, 11. [2] Mal. ii. 10–14.
[3] Mal. i. 6, 9, 10.

showed themselves the grinding and oppressive tyrants of the poor.[1] Everything that Ezra and Nehemiah had effected was well nigh undone.

To this sad state of things we owe the appearance of Malachi, the last of the prophets. There had been others of the sacred order, and even prophetesses, since the days of Haggai and Zechariah, but they had either opposed Ezra and Nehemiah, or failed to command public influence. In Malachi, however, the ancient seers had once more a worthy representative. Clearly realizing the wants of the time, fearless in his reproof, and stern in his demands and denunciations, he was no less striking in his vivid anticipations of the coming of the Messiah. Hitherto, this Promised Deliverer had been awaited as a royal descendant of David; but Malachi announces Him as no other than Jehovah Himself, in the person of the Messenger of His Covenant.[2] The prophet seems to have stood to Ezra and Nehemiah in the same relation as that of Isaiah to Hezekiah, or Haggai to Zerubbabel, and showed himself a powerful ally. In his words we hear for the last time the tone of the ancient seers.

His brief prophecy opens with a tender allusion to the love shown towards Judah, in the past, by Jehovah, as proved especially by the different treatment extended to it and to Edom, though Jacob and Esau, as twin brothers, might have expected equal favour to be shown their descendants. Yet Judah had been unfaithful to its Heavenly Father! What ingratitude could be so terrible!

2 "I have loved you,"[3] says Jehovah; Yet ye say, "In what hast thou loved us?"

[1] Mal. iii. 5. [2] Mal. iii. 1. [3] Mal. i. 1-5.

Jehovah answers,—

Is not Esau a brother of Jacob, says Jehovah. Yet I loved Jacob 3 and hated Esau, and laid his mountains waste, and made his inheritance a dwelling of jackals of the desert.[1] 4 Though Edom say, "we are broken in pieces, but we will build up our ruins again," thus says Jehovah: They may build, but I will throw down, and these desolate regions will be called "The Lands of Wickedness," and men will say of their inhabitants—"The people against whom Jehovah is indignant for ever."[2] 5 Your eyes will see this, and you will say, "Jehovah is great (in His doings) beyond the limits of Israel."

Having thus established the claim of Jehovah to the love and obedience of His people, the prophet advances to his charge against them, beginning with the sins of the priesthood.

6 A son honours his father and a servant his master. But if I be a Father, where is My honour? If I be a Master, where is the reverence due to Me? says Jehovah of Hosts, to you, O priests, who dishonour My name, and yet say, "How have we dishonoured Thy name?" 7 (Let me tell you.) You offer unclean bread on My altar,[3] and yet say, "In what have we defiled Thy name?" (You do it thus), by your saying (in your deeds, that) the table of Jehovah—His altar—is not worth respect. 8 When you offer blind animals for sacrifices, is that no offence? When you offer lame or sick creatures, is that no grievance?[4] If you offered it to your governor (though he be only a man), would he be pleased with you, or regard your person with favour? says Jehovah of Hosts. 9 But now, when you implore

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[1] The desolation of Edom referred to seems to have happened shortly before the prophet speaks. Idumea, as well as Judah, had been subdued by Babylon.

[2] Edom never regained its former glory. From the times of the Maccabees, especially, it sank, and its land became forsaken.

[3] By "bread," the prophet means offerings generally. See next verse. All offerings are called "bread of God." Lev. xxi. 6, 8, 17, etc.

[4] It was contrary to Lev. xxii. 20–22.

God to be gracious unto us—His people—you, at whose hand He has received such an insult—will He regard your persons with favour? says Jehovah of Hosts.

10 (How can He?) For I would, says He, there were one among you who would close the Temple doors altogether, that ye may not kindle fire on My altar, since your conduct makes it useless to do so? I have no pleasure in you, says Jehovah of Hosts, and I will not accept any offering at your hand!

God does not need their worship; He will hereafter be honoured over the whole world, by the heathen, whom they despise.

11 For, from the rising of the sun to its going down, My name will be great among the heathen, and in every place incense will be offered to My name, and a pure offering (not an impure, like yours); for My name shall be great among the heathen, says Jehovah of Hosts. 12 But ye have profaned it by your saying, "The table of Jehovah is defiled, and what is given to lay on it—the bread of God—is contemptible." 13 Ye have said also, "Ah, what a trouble it is!" And ye have sniffed at it, says Jehovah of Hosts, and bring what has been taken by force, and the lame, and the sick, (as offerings). Such is the kind of sacrifice ye have brought! Shall I accept this at your hand? says Jehovah of Hosts.

14 But cursed be he who tries to deceive Me (in this way); who, having in his flock a male, and having vowed to offer a sacrifice, offers to Jehovah a blemished beast. For I am a great King, says Jehovah of Hosts, and My name is feared among the nations.

Having thus fearlessly accused the priests, Malachi passes on to announce the punishment that will befall them, in case they do not take warning, and discharge their office aright.

1 And now,[1] this commandment is for you, O priests. 2 If ye will not hear and lay it to heart, to give glory to My name, says Jehovah of Hosts, I will send on you the curse, and curse your

[1] Mal. ii.

blessings, and, indeed, I have already cursed them, because ye do not lay it to heart.[1]

3 Behold, I will drive the sower away from the field,[2] and I will spread filth[3] on your faces—the filth of your feasts—(dishonouring you to the uttermost) and it will stick to you.[4] 4 And ye will know that I have sent this command to you (to honour My service, as the condition of the continuance of) My covenant with Levi, says Jehovah of Hosts.

5 My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave it him to secure His fearing Me, and he did fear Me, and tremble before My name. 6 The law of truth was in his mouth, and no unjust—no partial—decision was found in his lips; he walked with Me in peace and equity, and turned many back from transgression. 7 For the lips of the priest should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of Jehovah of Hosts.

8 But ye have departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble in regard to the law; ye have corrupted the covenant which I made with Levi, says Jehovah of Hosts, 9 Therefore I will also make you contemptible and despised before all the people, according as ye have not kept My ways, and have had respect of persons in your carrying out the law.

From his accusation of the priests, the prophet passes to the sin of those who had married heathen wives, divorcing Jewesses to do so, in spite of the recent legislation on the subject, and in the face of ancient prohibition.

10 Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless one to the other, profaning the covenant of our Father? 11 Judah has acted faithlessly, and abomination is committed in Israel and Jerusalem; for Judah has dishonoured his race—the holy people of Jehovah, whom He

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[1] "Your blessings," the tithes, etc. which were the revenues of the priests, but were already withheld by the people.

[2] Conjectural reading of Hitzig and Steiner. They depended on the farmer for their tithes.

[3] Lit., "dung."

[4] Vulgate and Luther.

loved—and has married the daughter of a foreign god. 12 May Jehovah cut off the (race of the) man that doeth this, both the watchman and him that answers,[1] from the tents of Jacob, and cut off him also who might present an offering on his behalf for the atonement of his sins!

13 Still further, ye have committed a second offence; ye cover the altar of Jehovah with tears,[2] with weeping, and sighs, so that Jehovah no longer turns towards your offering or receives that which is acceptable, at your hand. 14 And ye say, why? Because Jehovah has been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, towards whom thou hast acted faithlessly, though she was thy companion, (sharing joy and sorrow with thee), and the wife of thy marriage bond.[3] 15 No one who has any understanding has done this.[4] But ye say, "What was it that Abraham did—he who is the greatest name in our history? (Why did he send away Hagar, his wife, the mother of Ishmael? The answer is), he was seeking a Godly seed—(the child of promise); therefore, take heed to your spirit, and let no one act faithlessly.

Having thus rebuked the leading sins of his day, the prophet turns to the future. Restlessness and murmuring abounded. Men affected to believe that the wicked were favoured by God, and prospered, while the good were allowed to suffer, and they flouted the idea of the coming of a day of judgment—the great day of the Lord—so constantly announced by the prophets, age after age. They are addressed thus:

17 Ye weary Jehovah[5] with your words. Yet you say, "How have we wearied Him? (You have done it thus); by your saying "Every one that does evil is good in the sight of Jehovah, and He delights in him" or "Where is the God of judgment?"

In stern answer to these murmurers, Jehovah announces His coming to judgment.

[1] A proverbial expression for every one.
[2] Those of divorced Jewish wives.
[3] This refers to the heartless divorces in use.
[4] This seems the best reading. [5] Mal. ii. 17.

[1] Behold,[1] I send My Messenger,[2] to prepare the way before Me, and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye desire, says Jehovah of Host.

The "day of the Lord" in Malachi, however, unlike that of Joel and the earlier prophets, is not the advent of Jehovah as the warrior of Israel, to destroy the heathen, but that of One who should purify the kingdom of God from iniquity, and introduce the triumph of righteousness.

2 But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? For He is like a refiner's fire[3] and like fuller's[4] lye. 3 And He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and He will purify and cleanse the sons of Levi, as gold and silver (are purged from alloy by the smelter), that they may (henceforth) offer to Jehovah His offering, in righteousness. 4 Then will the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant to Jehovah, as in former days and long past years.

Thus the priests and Levites will first be judged, but then comes the visitation of all evil doers.

5 And I will come near you to judgment, and will be a swift witness against the sorcerers (who deal in magic spells and superstitions), and against adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those who oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and turn aside the alien from his right, and fear

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[1] Mal. iii.

[2] "My messenger" is in Hebrew "Malachi." This has led some to question whether the phrase be a title applied to the prophet, or a proper name. Keil understands "My messenger," in the first line of the verse, of John the Baptist, the messenger of the Covenant of our Lord. "Angels" or "Messengers" had often appeared on missions from God, but in Malachi the figure pervades the whole book. Messianic prediction was growing more distinct as ages passed.

[3] The furnace of a metal smelter.

[4] Or, wash erman's.

not Me, says Jehovah of Hosts. 6 For I, Jehovah, change not, therefore ye (true) sons of Jacob are not consumed.[1]

7 Since the days of your fathers ye have gone away from My ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, says Jehovah of Hosts. But ye say, "In what respect shall we return"?

8 Should a man defraud God? Yet, ye have defrauded me. But ye say, "In what respect have we defrauded Thee"? In tithes and heave offerings (for the support of My House). 9 Ye are cursed with the curse,[2] yet ye are (continually) defrauding Me—the whole of you. 10 Bring all the tithes into the (Temple) storehouse, that there may be food in My House, and put me to the proof by this, says Jehovah of Hosts, if I will not open to you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, (in copious rains), even to superabundance. And I will rebuke the devourer—the locust—for your sakes, so that he will no longer destroy the fruits of your ground, and the vine will no longer fail in the field, says Jehovah of Hosts. 12 And all nations will call you happy, for ye shall be a delightsome land, says Jehovah of Hosts.

13 Your words have been stout against Me, says Jehovah. Yet ye say, "What have we spoken together against Thee"? 14 Ye have said, "It is of no use serving God, and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinances, and have gone about in black mourning weeds before Jehovah of Hosts (in fasts)? This being so, we praise the proud, ungodly, (prosperous, man), as happy, for not only are the workers of wickedness built up, but when they have thus put God to proof, they are nevertheless delivered (from evil)."

These foolish and wicked speeches, the prophet contrasts with the bearing of the godly among the people, announcing, besides, the blessing vouchsafed to these faithful ones, and warning the impenitent of the certainty of their future doom.

[1] Steiner and Keil understand this verse thus: "For I, Jehovah, change not, and ye sons of Jacob shall not perish, as a race." I shall punish only the wicked among you.

[2] Unfruitfulness, bad harvests, drought, and locusts, etc.

16 Then they that feared Jehovah discoursed often one with another, and Jehovah hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him, for those who feared Jehovah and honoured His name. 17 And they shall be My treasure, says Jehovah, in The Day which I am preparing; and I will spare them (in that day) as a man spares his son that serves him. 18 Then shall ye, once more, see the difference between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serves God and him that serves Him not.

1 For, behold,[1] The Day comes, burning like an oven, and all the proud, and every worker of iniquity, shall be as the stubble (that feeds it); The Day that is coming will burn them up, says Jehovah of Hosts, so (utterly) that it will leave neither root nor twig of them.

2 But to you who fear My name, the Sun of Righteousness will arise, with healing in His beams,[2] and ye shall go forth (from the places in which you have hidden in that awful day), and leap like fed calves (for joy). 3 And ye will tread the wicked under foot, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, (burnt up as they will be), in The Day which I am preparing, says Jehovah of Hosts.

A final exhortation to the godly concludes the prophecy.

4 Be mindful of the Law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded in Horeb to all Israel, even (My) statutes and judgments! 5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet[3] before the coming of the great and dreadful Day of Jehovah; 6 and he will turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with utter destruction.[4]

The stern preaching of Malachi was vindicated by the condition of things which Nehemiah found on his return from Persia. Friendly relations with the open enemies

[1] Mal. iv. [2] Heb., "wings."

[3] Luke i. 16, 17. Matt. xi. 10. Luke vii. 27. Matt. xvii. 11. Mark ix. 11.

[4] Lit., "a ban" which devoted anything to utter destruction.

of strict Judaism had been shown even by the high priest Eliashib, who was either related to Tobiah the Ammonite, by marriage, or connected with the party friendly to him in high Jewish society. In open disrespect to both Ezra and Nehemiah, Eliashib had gone so far, during the governor's absence, as to make over to Tobiah one of the houses in the outer Temple buildings, appropriating to his use, among others, the great chamber in which the flour and frankincense for the altar, the vessels for measuring the quantities required, and the tithes of corn, wine, and oil, for the Levites, the guards of the doors, and the singers, were stored.[1] Such an abuse at once roused the indignation of Nehemiah. That the high priest, of all men, should have lodged Tobiah in Jerusalem, especially in the courts of the House of God, was an outrage not to be endured for a moment. The furniture of the intruder was at once unceremoniously thrown out into the road; the chambers he had occupied cleansed as if from surpassing defilement, and the vessels and stores, removed for his convenience, carried back to their former places.

This irregularity, however, was only one symptom of the widely spread moral declension, denounced so strenuously by Malachi. The non-payment of the tithes, in particular, shocked Nehemiah. Summoning the chief men of the community, therefore, to his presence, he bitterly reproached them with their failure to collect the dues for the Temple and Priests. "Why," asked he, "is the House of God forsaken?" It was a serious matter. The Temple services had been suspended for want of Levites to discharge the sacred offices, and its courts were left empty of worshippers.[2] Such carelessness could not be suffered. The elders of the various

[1] Neh. xiii. 5. [2] Neh. xiii. 11.

localities must at once attend to their duty. Such rigour brought the happiest results. The tithes were forthwith collected from the whole land.

The strict observance of the Sabbath, to which the people had pledged themselves in their recent covenant, had been as shamefully violated as the engagement respecting tithes. As already noticed, the wine-presses were everywhere as busy on the seventh day as on the rest of the week: harvest work was continued during its sacred hours, and the sheaves, laden on asses, carried, all day long, to the threshing floors, as at other times. Even in Jerusalem, the Sabbath was noisy with market people bringing wine, grapes, figs, and other produce, to the gates through the Friday night, and selling them on the Saturday.[1]

Phenician fishermen and dealers in dried fish and in every kind of Tyrian ware, attended the fair weekly, in numbers. The day on which all work should have ceased, was the least quiet of any. Such desecration could not be suffered. Calling before him the municipal authorities, Nehemiah rebuked them sharply, reminding them that similar conduct on the part of their fathers had, in part, been the cause of their national calamities.[2] Henceforward, by his command, the gates of the city were to be shut on Friday night, as soon as their archways grew dark, and they were not to be opened till sunset on Saturday, when the Jewish Sabbath was over. Men were also placed at each gate, to see that no burdens were smuggled in during the day of rest. Baulked in their hopes of finding a mart inside the city, the market people and traders tried to open one outside the walls; free egress being allowed the inhabitants during the

[1] Neh. xiii. 18. The Sabbath began on our Friday at sunset, and lasted till our Saturday at sunset.

[2] Jer. xvii. 21.

Sabbath, though traffic was prohibited. But this lasted only a short time. A threat to arrest the offenders was sufficient to secure the honour of the holy day, for the time. Against any recurrence of such disorder, Levites, ceremonially purified for the purpose, were appointed to attend at each gate during the Sabbath, and keep a strict watch over those who went out or in.[1]

The question of mixed marriages, in spite of all efforts on the part of Ezra and Nehemiah, and of all promises on that of the people, still gave great trouble. Not a few, as we have seen in the denunciation by Malachi, broke the law in this matter, to the extent of divorcing Jewesses to marry heathen women, or at least proselytes. Nehemiah noticed this very soon. Such indifference in a matter which he, like Ezra, regarded as vital, roused his indignation. Pasha though he was, he could not restrain himself when some who had thus offended were brought before him. From fierce words he passed to violence, rushing at the offenders, striking them, and tearing their hair and beards in his burning anger. Nor would he rest till they had sworn by Jehovah, to abandon their sin.[2] One transgressor, indeed, Manasseh, the grandson of the high priest Eliashib, who had ventured to marry the daughter of Sanballat, the bitterest enemy of Jerusalem in its past trials, did not escape so easily. Refusing to put away his wife, Nehemiah's indignation knew no bounds. A priest was bound to marry only a virgin of his own race,[3] and thus the priesthood was defiled by this alliance. Besides, the guilty man was a younger son of the high-priestly family, so that the whole order was compromised. The offence was, in fact, a breach at once of the covenant granted to Phinehas, and of that made directly with the

[1] Neh. xiii. 22. [2] Neh. xiii. 25. [3] Lev. xxi. 7–14.

tribe of Levi.[1] Nehemiah, therefore, ignominously expelled him from the priesthood, chasing him from his presence with a fierce imprecation on one who, with his family, "had defiled at once the covenant of the priesthood and of the Levites."[2]

The closing verses of Nehemiah's notices of affairs in Judah, under his rule, give a brief summary of the results of his government, apart from the great work of building the walls of Jerusalem. He had purified the community from heathen customs, and had restored an orderly administration of public worship. He had further arranged for the regular provision of wood for the altar, and for the tithes and first fruits being paid in for the service of the Temple and its ministers. The legal spirit of later Judaism shines out in such a record, set down with minute exactness as a ground on which it could be pleaded that God should remember one for good. Malachi, in the same way, had denounced marriage with foreigners, but his preaching had been mainly directed against the moral evils of the times. The exact observance of Levitical rules was, however, the prominent characteristic of the reforms of both Nehemiah and Ezra. The contrast marks the formalism of the age after the Exile; so different from the spirit of earlier days.

Of Nehemiah's later history we know nothing, but he and Ezra fill a large part in Jewish legends and traditions. To the generations immediately succeeding, Nehemiah seemed the greater man of the two, for it is he, and not Ezra, whom we meet in the list of heroes of the nation given by the son of Sirach.[3] In the age of the Maccabees

[1] Num. xxv. 13. Exod. xxviii. 1. Lev. xxi. 6–8.

[2] Neh. xiii. 29. The civil power in this case, as in so many others in Jewish history, is supreme over the ecclesiastical.

[3] Ecclus. xlix. 11–13.

it was to Nehemiah, not to Zerubbabel, that the glory was ascribed of rebuilding the Temple, setting up again the altar, offering the first sacrifice on it, and discovering the sacred fire, which the priests, it was believed, had hidden in a dry cistern.[1] To him, also, was attributed the collection of the sacred books, and the formation of the Canon.[2] But in later times Ezra took the chief place in the national memory. Some hold him to have been the prophet known to us as Malachi. He had reproduced the whole of the Old Testament Scriptures, it was said, from memory, after the Chaldeans had destroyed them. Apocryphal books were written in his name, and he was glorified as the founder of the Great Synagogue of tradition, to which the elaboration of the Law was mainly ascribed.

The whole subsequent history of Judaism is the monument of the zeal and devotion of the two Reformers. To their stern exclusiveness was directly due the hatred and rivalry between Jew and Samaritan, the creation of the Rabbinical Law, which has buried the teachings of Moses under its endless comments, and the rise of that fierce pride and Pharisaic religionism, which culminated in the spiritual death of the nation, and in the establishment of a ritualism which controls the Jew in every act, from the cradle to the grave. Their stern Puritanism, too earnestly fixed on the letter, ended by making it supreme. They preserved the nation, and kept it true to Jehovah, but introduced a principle which, in the end, changed His worship, in the nation at large, from that of the heart and life, to a slavery to mere outward forms. As always happens, in achieving the triumph of ceremonialism, they laid the axe at the root of spiritual religion.

FINIS.

[1] 2 Macc. i. 18, 19. [2] 2 Macc. ii. 13.

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